



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

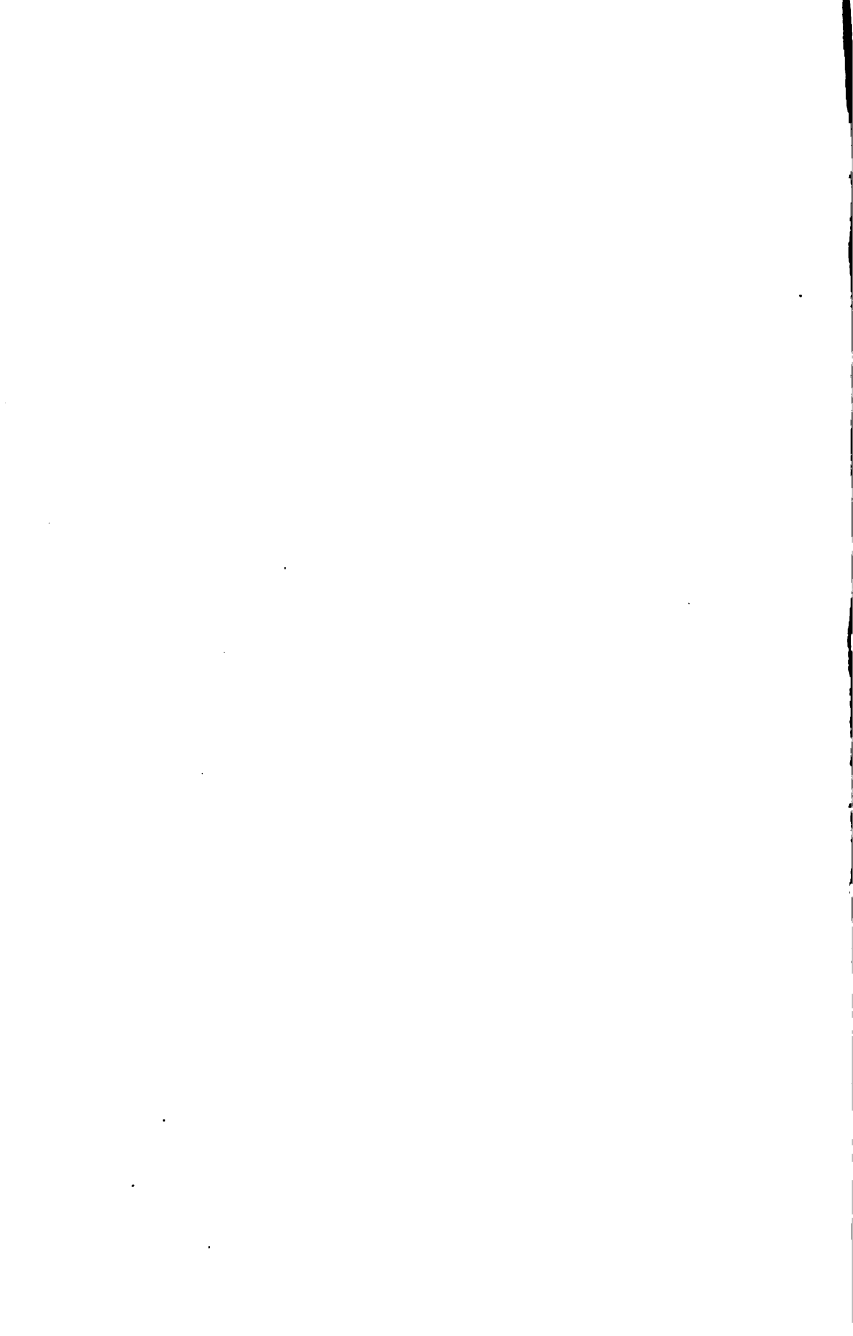
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 07480845 6

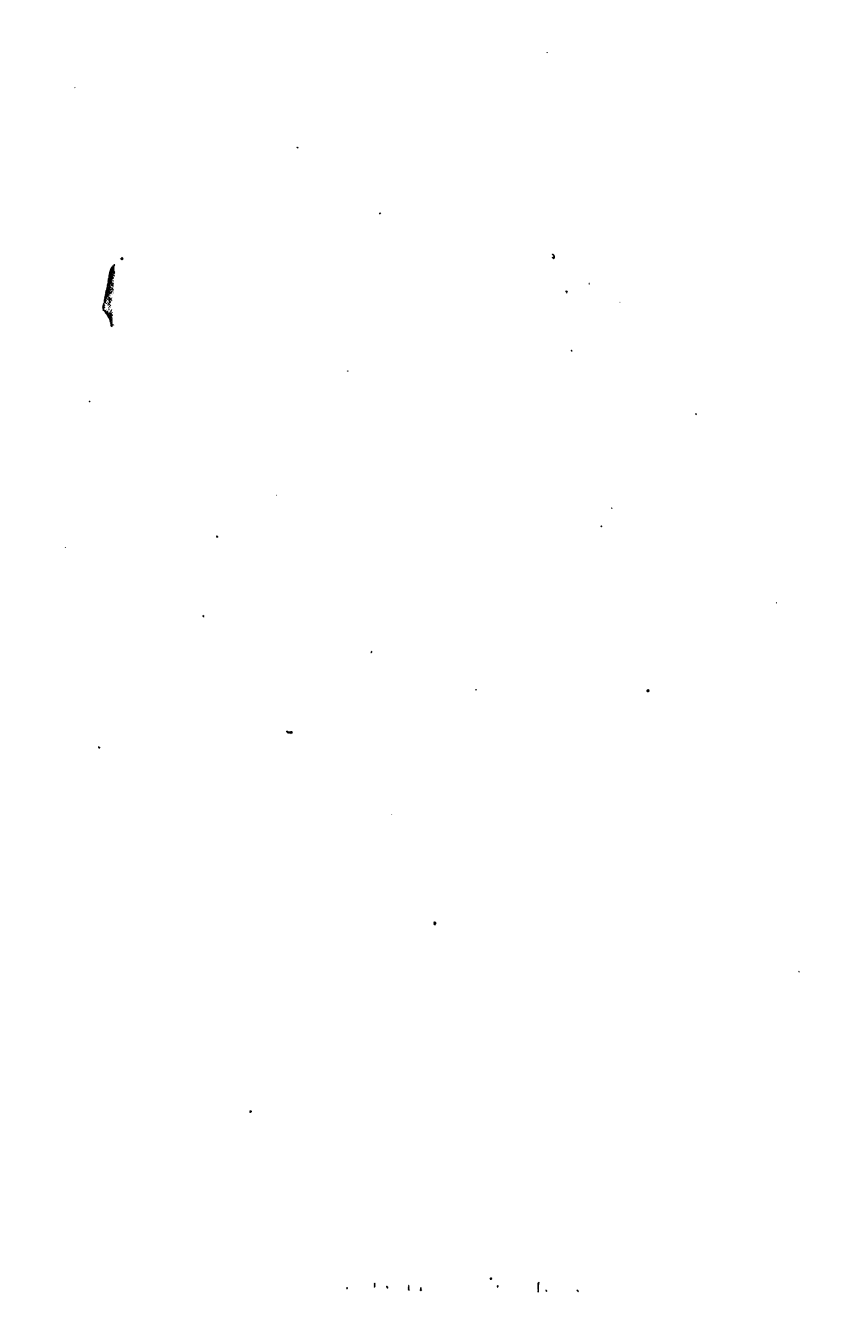
112
C. 12. 1. 1. 1. 1.



(Edward
Carpenter
NE



1944



3/1/21
1

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

A Romance of Old New Orleans

By

EDWARD CHILDS CARPENTER

Author of "Captain Courtesy," etc.

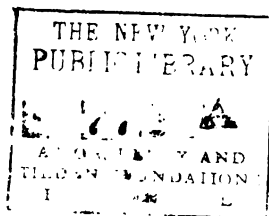
Illustrations by

ELENORE PLAISTED ABBOTT



PHILADELPHIA
GEORGE W. JACOBS & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

AP



Copyright, 1907, by
GEORGE W. JACOBS & COMPANY
Published September, 1907.

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

**TO THE GIRL
WHOSE NAME SHOULD BE ON THE TITLE PAGE OF
THIS BOOK, BUT WHO PREFERS TO HAVE IT
WRITTEN WHERE IT IS SAFER
FROM THE CRITICS**

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I "THE GATEWAY OF DREAMS".....	1
II MADEMOISELLE OF THE MAGNOLIAS...	29
III IN THE ATELIER JALLOT.....	39
IV JALLOT OVERHEARS AN INTRIGUE AND THINKS OF A RHYME.....	53
V A GENTLEMAN IN MOTLEY.....	58
VI SPRING—THE INSURGENT!.....	68
VII DEBTS HAVE LONG MEMORIES.....	77
VIII "AN EXCELLENT SHOP IN WHICH TO GET YOUR THROAT CUT".....	84
IX A PETTICOAT AND A CONSPIRACY.....	91
X JALLOT IS CALLED "PAPOUTE".....	106
XI THE COMPLAINT OF MONSIEUR GAZO- NAC	116
XII THE MALICE OF HIS ENEMY.....	125
XIII AN EDITOR WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR..	140
XIV A LOTTERY, A LOVE AFFAIR AND AN INVITATION	148
XV THE VEILED FACE OF MYSTERY.....	164
XVI IT IS EASIER TO FLY THAN TO FIGHT...	170

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XVII SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER.....	174
XVIII HOPE HOLDS COUNCIL WITH DESPAIR..	199
XIX THE FIREFLY MAKES LIGHT FOR HIS OWN SOUL.....	207
XX THE FOLLY OF BEING IMPETUOUS.....	222
XXI THE BEST OF THE SPOIL.....	234
XXII VIOLET DOMINOES.....	240
XXIII MASQUES, MOONLIGHT AND MALIG- NITY	248
XXIV NIGHT AND THE SHARD IN A WOMAN'S SOUL	264
XXV THE HEART OF THE YELLOW KITTEN..	270
XXVI A CRESCENDO OF HYSTERIA.....	279
XXVII ONE MAN AGAINST A HUNDRED.....	290
XXVIII THE BARRIER OF CAST.....	301
XXIX THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT.....	309
XXX THEY AND THE NIGHT.....	319

ILLUSTRATIONS

"HOW IS THAT, MONSIEUR?".....	<i>Frontispiece</i>
"I HAVE BOUGHT THE WOMAN I LOVE"	<i>Facing Page 196</i>
"LET US WEAR OUR HEARTS ON OUR SLEEVES"	" 242
"YOU CARED ENOUGH TO COME AT NIGHT—ALONE?"	" 284
"I BESTOW UPON THEE THE NOBLEST AND OLDEST ORDER"	" 334



The Code of Victor Jallot

CHAPTER I

"THE GATEWAY OF DREAMS"

On the night of December 13, 1803, long processions of lantern-lights, twinkling like myriads of fireflies, fluttered through the dark streets of New Orleans and swarmed about the arched entrance of the little French theatre in the Rue St. Pierre. From every quarter of the city these nodding lights came slowly on in single file, for the slaves who carried them were guiding masters and mistresses across treacherous stepping-stones and along narrow banquettes. Time and again the cavalcades halted, signalling and clustering, close upon some place where the mire oozed deeply over the foot-bank, which was often nothing more than a log, or the gunwale of a broken flatboat laid lengthwise in the mud. Then madam, if her escort were too old to render assistance, lifted her silken skirts just so much higher and, with the innocent oath, "*Coton mai!*" pressed on as best she could; but if her beau were young and

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

strong, my lady surrendered herself gratefully to his arms for the portage.

For the most part, the hazards of the banquettes were met with good humor or resignation, since the people of this little Paris, reared in the American wilderness, were long used to streets so impassable with mud that vehicles were almost out of fashion. Laughter and applause were often the reward of some agile gentleman, who, under the burden of a stout and decorous lady, leaped the mire without suffering so much as a spatter on his hose.

"Bis! Bis! Encore!" they would cry to the accompaniment of hand-claps and the bobbing of lanterns; and he who had so gallantly taken the leap would, like as not, turn back and gaily challenge those who followed to better his performance.

"Ma foi!" exclaimed an old Frenchman, as he sounded the depth of the slough with his long ebony cane, "I should not object to walking knee deep in the muck to hear an opera; but, *Ciel*, I dislike soiling even a boot-heel for the sake of seeing a play written by a barber!"

"Gaspard!" protested his wife. "This Monsieur Jallot is much more than a barber—he is a poet."

"Chérie, I shall forgive him that, too, if he can make me smile; but I dare him to make me laugh. Here! Take my hand, *Félicie*!"

"THE GATEWAY OF DREAMS"

So they went on, choosing their footing daintily.

Another party, under the convoy of a colored *bonne*, who held her lantern high and walked like a grenadier, turned the corner of the Rue Bourbon and paused before a wide gap in the stepping-stones.

"Dese ve'y bad place, Missou," exclaimed the slave, turning back to address an elderly German, over whose shoulder loomed the face of a young woman. The meagre lantern rays gently touched her features, which seemed to glow as though she, herself, had a light within. This irradiation did not come from her eyes—the long sweep of her lashes veiled them—but rather from her countenance, which bore a faint smile, the creation of a wondrous mouth as scarlet as a poppy. Its brilliance emphasized the paleness of her skin and the sombreness of her dark hair. A scarf of old rose, fastened under her patrician chin, gave her face the appearance of some exquisite tropical flower.

"I shall make of me a conveyance for you, Antoinette," said the German.

His words brought forth a babble of protests from a group of beaux, who crowded the foot-way at the skirts of the young woman.

"Permit me to carry Mademoiselle!" entreated one.

"Let that be my privilege," begged another.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"No, no, Monsieur, I claim that honor!" insisted a third.

In their eagerness to wait upon the girl, they all but jostled her into the mire. She gave a little cry and laughingly caught at the nearest arm, which proved to be that of the old German.

"I propose to carry Antoinette myself across the mud," he announced, promptly gathering up his charge and depositing her with a grunt of satisfaction on the dry banquette.

"Bravo, bravo, bravo, Monsieur Froebel!" chorused the young men.

"Now let us hurry," said Antoinette. "We shall be late for the play."

"Better late than early—in this case," returned one, who kept close at her heels.

"Hah, jealous are you of mine friend, Jallot," exclaimed the German, prodding the lantern-bearer with his stick.

"Jealous of a barber? Not I. I am only envious of you, Monsieur Froebel, because Made-moiselle trusts herself to you at the crossings."

"Monsieur Gazonac," laughed Antoinette, "this—eh—tonsor, what is his name?"

"Jallot!" volunteered one.

"Jallot," she continued, "is not a barber to-night—he is a playwright!"

"He is many more things than that besides," put in the German.

"He is a universal genius," jeered the last of

"THE GATEWAY OF DREAMS"

the party, crowding up to the others. "On Monday he is a poet; on Tuesday, a fencing master; on Wednesday, a physician; on Thursday, a prestidigitator; on Friday, a dancing master; on Saturday, a critic; on Sunday, a beau!"

"And every day, a barber?" added Gazonac persistently.

"And every night?" queried Antoinette.

"The devil knows what!"

"Then I must the devil be," rejoined the German with some heat. "Jallot a philanthropist is, something none of you know anything about."

By this time they were close to the Théâtre Saint Pierre where the banquette widened, and a handshaking, chattering throng was assembling under the flare of fire-pots. It was an animated, informal levee, within a huge circle of light flung wide from the white façade of the theatre, and rendering black the velvet night about, save where the processions of on-coming lanterns spangled the dark.

A man, in the dingy olive livery of the theatre, appeared between the arches of the gallery, which overhung the entrance, and lustily rang a huge bell. Instantly there was a swirl of bell-crowned beavers, chapeaux and graceful veils undulating up the steps and through the arcade of the little playhouse, while far to right and left on the Rue Saint Pierre danced the hurrying lanterns.

Well might they hasten, for already the colored

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

orchestra was playing the overture. From their station on one side of the gallery and close to the proscenium arch, the musicians looked down upon the noblesse of New Orleans: French, Spaniards, Germans, but most of all the Creoles, that proud Caucasian race, born in Louisiana of European ancestors. Their women were lovely as white roses, with ivory cheeks almost imperceptibly touched with color; eyes and hair as dark as midnight; graceful and generous, simple and charming. Their men were gay, impetuous, sudden in quarrels and as quick to patch them; handsome and irresponsible. For the most part of Gallic blood, they spoke French, which was then the current speech of Louisiana, and jealously maintained the supremacy of their tongue against the invasion of all others, particularly English, a language they held as barbarous.

The Creoles naturally became the head and front of the noblesse of New Orleans, and to their exclusive circle only the gentility of the old world gained admittance. With the transfer of Louisiana to Spain came the infusion of Castilian blood, so that the Creole often revealed in fascinating blend the vivacious brilliancy of the French and the langourous seductiveness of the Spanish. The Germans, too, but in less degree, added another tinge to the Creole strain.

And now, on the eve of that day when France, so shortly repossessed of Louisiana must fulfill

“THE GATEWAY OF DREAMS”

her bargain and surrender her colony to the United States, only the American knocked in vain at the door of the Creole heart. He was a stranger, an intruder, a barbarian; and although he had come to stay he could have no fellowship with those who ruled the social state.

So, among the audience in the Théâtre Saint Pierre that night, the American who ventured there, found himself in hostile company. Women pressed airily by him with skirts held close, as though they feared contagion from his touch; men turned their backs or scowled openly upon him, and it mattered not whether the stranger wore duffle or deerskin, the scorn for him was impartial. In all that playhouse he met no friendly glance, save from his isolated countrymen; and though he might endure the despal of the Creole men as he would a scratch, the disdain of the women, striking at his vanity, surely held a deeper hurt.

With what a sigh then he must have looked over that brave assembly: The women were tricked out in Paris fashions of the previous year—high waists, bound beneath their busts with ribboned sashes; soft clinging skirts, suggesting, rather than revealing, the lovely lines of their figures; scarfs and veils in delicate shades, thrown back from their heads, and half disclosing, half concealing the ivory sheen of arms and shoulders. The men were caparisoned more soberly in tail coats, some light and some dark, buttoned closely across their

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

chest and showing at the waist a bit of gay vesting; nankeen or satin knee-breeches, silken hose, pumps and high white stocks of fine linen completed costumes which were nothing if not distinguished.

Under the soft play of yellow lights, cast from lantern and candelabrum, this assembly of quaint and vari-colored trappings, bloomed, as it were, with all the enchantment of a tapestried garden, while the fluttering fans suggested countless butterflies swarming over a flower-bed. To complete this charming illusion, there was a steady hum of conversation, like the buzz of bees' wings, which overcame, at times, even the strident notes of the violins.

This hum wedded to music penetrated the stage curtain and fell upon the ears of a man who stood in the shadow of a heap of battered scenery close to the green-room door. There was something hypnotic to him in that drone of voices and violins as he followed with apprehensive eyes the setting of the stage. The medley of murmurs and music struck him to the soul, awakening strange and conflicting emotions. He was at once inspired and depressed, intoxicated and panic-stricken; but the dominant undertone of his feelings was apprehension. He was the author of the play, which in a few minutes would be summoned for trial before that sinister jury—a first night audience.

"THE GATEWAY OF DREAMS"

He wished himself a thousand miles away, yet he could not find the will to move. His mind, like the stage before him, was chaos; and that comparison occurred to him as he watched the scurrying hands dragging from dusty corners the pathetic-looking furniture and shabby properties for a boudoir setting, and heaping them in confusion before the tattered battlements of a castle. A quartette of coatless fiends hurtled by him with a ragged dais, and across the stage another group pushed on a ridiculous forest. They seemed to toil in a mad, reckless, disordered fashion, disappearing and reappearing within a wide circle of light, like genii with their loads, apparently paying no heed to the stage-manager, who, madder than they, ran hither and thither shouting and gesticulating.

The air was thick with dust and heavy with a musty odor, which blended strangely with the pungent smell of pigments used by the actors in their make-up.

From his shadowy post the author had but to turn his head to look into the green-room, where the cast was assembling, and he sighed deeply and smiled ruefully, thinking how much the success of his play depended upon these people over whom he had no control.

Rouquette, the *jeune premier*, was nervously pacing the worn floor and frequently pausing to look at himself in one of the mirrors, which were

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

set at intervals about the cracked plastered walls of that low-ceilinged room, where testimony of past performers and plays was displayed in yellow bills and faded etchings.

"Such verse!" exclaimed Rouquette, petulantly, addressing himself to no one in particular; "the lines keep popping out of my head as fast as I memorize them."

Mademoiselle Rémy, the *jeune première*, shifted her glance from the mirror in which she was studying the effect of a rose in her corsage, and turned belligerently upon the speaker: "There is nothing the matter with the lines—it is you who do not understand them."

"Understand them?" Rouquette laughed. "No! Who could? There's no sense to them!"

"Certainly not as you read them!"

The author, overhearing this, smiled and thanked the actress in his heart.

"I suppose you could read them better?" retorted the actor with a sneer.

"I am not so vain as to think that, but I am sure Monsieur Jallot could," replied Mademoiselle Rémy, wheeling about to the glass again and attacking her nose with a powder-puff.

"*Parbleu*, I wish the author were playing this stupid part himself."

"So do I!" She clasped her hands ecstatically; and the playwright, watching her through the door, decided that she was charming.

"THE GATEWAY OF DREAMS"

Just then Mademoiselle Sejour, the soubrette of the company, came into the green-room and remarked, poising a hare's-foot impudently: "The title of the thing—'The Gateway of Dreams'—is silly enough to keep people away from the theatre."

"La, la, la," gibed Mademoiselle Rémy, daintily touching her charming coiffure with the ends of her fingers, "the whole of New Orleans is in front!"

"Mere curiosity—to see what sort of trash a barber can write," snapped Rouquette. "When I think of the great parts I have played in——"

"Shut up!" interrupted the comedian, pulling his wig down over his forehead, and scowling in what he thought was a humorous fashion; "the people come to 'La Comédie' to-night just as they go to a bull fight—for the joy of the slaughter."

"What a splendid toreador you will make, Barde! You deliver a line—and the play falls dead!" The leading lady effectually silenced the comedian with this counter and went to the relief of the heavy man, who was struggling with his sword knot. "What do you think of the new piece, Liotau?" she inquired, deftly arranging the ribbon.

"An actor's opinion is worth very little in such matters, Mademoiselle," he rejoined; "but, since

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

you ask me, I think Jallot's comedy will be a great—failure."

Mademoiselle Rémy started back with an exclamation of chagrin, and the author himself felt crushed, for Liotau was an artist and an actor of long experience.

"Hah!" plagued the *ingénue*, snapping her fingers at the *jeune première*, "you hear that! I told Monsieur Courmont that he was mad to put on a play by a barber!"

"Pardon," jeered the leading man; "Jallot is a tonsorial artist!"

"Oh, the airs he gives himself," ejaculated Barde with a smirk. "You might think he was Voltaire."

"We never should have had to play his wretched piece," scolded Rouquette; "had it not been for that doddering old Trudeau, who professes to have found a genius in Jallot. If the truth were known he secures the production of the barber's play in payment for his daughter's fencing lessons."

"You are mistaken, Monsieur!" At these words, pronounced with quiet emphasis, the players looked with surprise toward the door. There stood a man who promised to carry a debonair spirit, and all the splendor of youth, into his approaching prime. He was tall and lithe, though strong, and wore with distinction an irreproachable costume fashioned after the latest

"THE GATEWAY OF DREAMS"

French mode. His dark brown hair was brushed back from a broad and tranquil brow, beneath which gray eyes, full of life and light, looked out intrepidly. A delicate nose with sensitive nostrils; firm lips, half-parted in a smile and showing his white teeth, indicated a noble and temperamental nature. One of his fine hands held a bell-crowned beaver, and the other a sword-cane.

His unexpected appearance brought a look of apprehension to the face of Rouquette, and Made-moiselle Rémy gasped, "Monsieur Jallot!"

He acknowledged her surprised salutation with a bow, and addressed himself to the company: "Mesdames and Messieurs, quite by accident I overheard something of your conversation. I care nothing about your opinion of my play—the audience will pass upon it finally to-night—but I must challenge the imputation made against Monsieur Trudeau. The gentleman who uttered the unhandsome remarks to which I refer, no doubt spoke thoughtlessly and will therefore be glad of this chance to correct himself."

The eyes of everyone in the room rested upon Rouquette, who felt himself growing exceedingly warm. His impulse was to strike Jallot, but he remained calm enough to remember the poet's reputation as a swordsman, and accordingly swallowed his wrath without digesting it and mumbled an apology.

"First act!" called the prompter, and Rouquette,

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

Mademoiselle Sejour, Barde and Liotau, who opened the play, brushed hurriedly past Jallot and took their places on the stage.

The author looked after them with a sigh and started nervously as three loud raps of a mallet, echoing through the playhouse, signalled the rise of the curtain.

He made a move to go, when a light touch fell upon his arm. Turning, he looked into the sympathetic eyes of the leading lady. "Mademoiselle Rémy?" he questioned, taking her hand.

"You must not mind what they say, Monsieur. It is a beautiful play. It must succeed. I feel it!"

He smiled at her in gratitude. "Since you have faith, I shall be hopeful. At least I know that one part—the most important of all—will be played ideally, Mademoiselle."

She too was smiling now. "Wish me good luck, Monsieur, as I wish you!" She gave him her hand again with a pretty air of camaraderie.

"Good luck, Mademoiselle, and bless you." He raised the tips of her fingers to his lips.

"There's my cue!" With that she started for the wings, daintily blowing him a kiss as she disappeared.

Jallot stood for a moment listening to the voices of the players, then picked up his surtout and tip-toed out through the stage door. Choosing his way carefully along the dark banquettes, he presently came to the deserted Rue St. Pierre,

"THE GATEWAY OF DREAMS"

where he paused undecidedly for a moment, but at last yielded to an impulse and entered the theatre. Stationing himself at the very back of the auditorium, he watched the progress of the act, while hope and despair in turn wrung his heart and mind with exquisite torture. He mentally cursed Rouquette for the stupid way he read the verse, and it seemed to him that none of the actors, save Mademoiselle Rémy and Liotau, cared about or understood the significance of the scene.

"*Cochon!* Fathead! He doesn't even know his lines, much less how to act," fumed the author. "I should like to kill him Ah, if you had but a pinch of her art in your imbecile makeup!"

Mademoiselle Rémy, struggling under the burden of the entire scene, carried it off with spirit, and on her exit the audience for the first time vouchsafed their applause. This trifling encouragement, however, was soon forgotten, for Liotau, left to finish the act with Rouquette—who gave him no support and accepted none—became discouraged and, as the *jeune premier* stumbled in his lines, the heavy man faltered and the curtain fell to the accompaniment of jeers and a few feeble handclaps.

Courmont, the manager of the theatre, saw Jallot leaning against the wall and approached him. "Monsieur," he began, "I do not think your play is going to be the success we hoped."

"Certainly not!" exclaimed the author with

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

some warmth; "when you employ such stupid players."

"Do you mean to say that Mademoiselle Rémy—?"

"Ah, she is intelligent, charming—even distinguished; but one artist, Monsieur, does not make a company."

"Bah!" sneered Courmont; "that's what every scribbler says when he has a failure. You are very lucky to have your comedy played at all!"

"Played?—did you say? I should call it butchered!" Jallot turned on his heel and made his way to the lobby, now thronged with promenaders. Heads turned to look after him as he passed to the entrance where he was challenged by a tall, broad-shouldered American, who wrung his hand and said something that made him smile.

"Antoinette! Look! That Jallot is!" exclaimed the old German, Ludwig Froebel, pulling at the long stole which hung from the girl's girdle.

"What interest can Mademoiselle have in a barber?" questioned a Frenchman.

"Monsieur Gazonac, I have no interest, but I confess to a certain curiosity," rejoined Antoinette. "Show him to me!"

"You may see the best of him—his back," jeered Gazonac. "There—by the portière—talking to that outrageous American."

"Oh, what a handsome back—for a barber! Does he dress your hair as poorly as he writes plays?"

"THE GATEWAY OF DREAMS"

"No, Mademoiselle, he is really an admirable barber."

"Then he should stick to his—eh—curling-irons!"

"But this his first play is," expostulated the German. "He can do as better than this on another time."

"He couldn't do worse," tittered the Frenchman.

"Oh, you are not fair, Monsieur," protested Antoinette: "I shall reserve my criticism until we have seen the last act."

"*Morbleu!* And there are two to come!" sighed Gazonac, following the girl into the auditorium.

Many such fragments of conversation floated to the ears of Jallot, who would have fled if the American had not stopped him, and assured him, with a laugh, that it was an excellent thing for an author to hear the truth unvarnished.

"My dear Osbourne," complained Jallot with a wry smile, "I am already quite aware that everyone considers that I have committed a crime in writing the play; but I am like a mother with her child—I may say hard things about it myself, yet I cannot endure hearing others scold it. I've heard enough for one night! Let me go, or I shall be boxing the ears of some of my critics."

The American laughed again and held him fast

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT.

by the shoulders. "I swear, Jallot, the play is not half bad."

The other cocked up one eyebrow, in mock surprise, and exclaimed, "Impossible!" Then, after an instant's reflection, he added, "I overheard a crocodile in skirts make the same remark between a pinch of snuff and a sneeze; and I had a notion to retort that if she possessed the least spark of wit she must have observed that the half bad part was the company."

"Let me hasten to say that I had observed as much myself, Jallot."

"Thank you, Monsieur," retorted his companion with drollery; "I am extremely grateful to find among all the audience one discriminating soul."

"Then you confess that an American may possess taste?"

Jallot, benevolently smiling, rejoined, "Yes, when, like you, he not only speaks but thinks in French."

Osbourne beamed at this, for he was proud of his linguistic accomplishments, and, linking his arm through that of the author, drew him toward the auditorium.

"Wait a moment," insisted Jallot. "Listen to this."

They were within ear-shot of a group of Creoles, who were carrying on an animated dis-

"THE GATEWAY OF DREAMS"

cussion. Said one, "How impertinent of a barber to write a play!"

"Pardon me, Mademoiselle," returned another; "the impertinence is not in writing a play, but in writing a poor one."

"Suppose it had been a masterpiece?" questioned a third.

"That," contended the first speaker, "would have been a still greater piece of audacity."

"Then you think that destiny has no right to bestow talent upon any save the noblesse, Mademoiselle?"

"The arts themselves, being the height of refinement, should only be entrusted to the hands of the noblesse. You see to-night the result of their gross employment!"

"Mademoiselle, I find nothing gross in this comedy of Jallot's, though I confess that so far it seems to lack that dramatic quality which makes for success. I fancy if you were to read it you would discover many inspired lines."

"My brother assures me that this barber is quite an estimable person," put in a French woman.

"It is strange then that he does not invite the prodigy to dine."

"Which is precisely what he did; but, to my mother's relief, Monsieur Jallot declined in the most charming note imaginable; and the result was that my brother dined with him."

"I should as soon think of accepting the hos-

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

pitality of an American."

"Sufficient for me," gasped Osbourne, and, as the signal was sounding for the rise of the curtain, he hurried Jallot to a seat in the rear of the theatre and placed himself at the author's side.

It became clear to Jallot, from the beginning of the second act, that Rouquette was playing his rôle with determined perversion, so that all the admirable art of Mademoiselle Rémy and Liotau went for nothing; the climax of the scene was blurred, and play and players seemed hopelessly lost in a fog of their own making.

As the dramatist, thoroughly disgusted, sank back in his chair with a smothered oath, Osbourne laid a hand on his arm. "Take heart," he said, "it might be much worse."

Jallot feebly smiled his gratitude. "That's comforting! I thought it could not be worse."

"Indeed, it could be. Every one isn't leaving the theatre. You will see, when they return from the foyer, that at least half of your audience is faithful."

"Faithful? Oh, no! Curious, perhaps; or worse yet—ghoulish. Besides, this thing has become amusing. They stay to laugh at me, not with me."

"Monsieur Jallot!"

At the sound of his name, the author rose hastily to accept a hand extended to him with an enthusiastic greeting. The possessor of that hand

“THE GATEWAY OF DREAMS”

was Otilie Trudeau, daughter of the managing director of the theatre, who stood immediately behind her.

Otilie was undergoing that subtle and lovely transition from girlhood to womanhood. This change brought with it an air of coquetry, an enchanting dowry of healthy spirits, which suggested the flirt but never the jilt. Although she was not small, she was dainty, and the soft, full curves of her figure were all in lines of prettiness. A piquante face, rather highly colored for a Creole, radiated happiness, and her smile possessed the charm of a child's. She wore a fastidiously made dress of pink flowered silk, trimmed with lace, which made her look like a Parisian—all that an indulgent parent demanded of her.

“Monsieur,” she was saying to Jallot, “your play is fascinating.”

Osbourne, discreetly standing aside, gazed down upon her, conscious of a pleasant glow about his heart.

“A magnificent fabrication, Mademoiselle, for which I thank you,” smiled Jallot; and in a whisper, added: “May I have the honor of presenting to you Monsieur Osbourne, a man worthy of even your acquaintance?”

Otilie stole a look at the American, who affected an interest in the crowd promenading the foyer. “I think I could endure him,” she purred, dimpling.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

Whereupon Jallot introduced Osbourne to the girl and her father, who presently asked, "What is the trouble with your play, Monsieur? When you read it to me, I was impressed both with its diction and the ingenuity of its plot, and I felt confident of its success."

"The fault lies with the *jeune premier*, and, in fact, with every member of the cast, excepting only Mademoiselle Rémy and Liotau," replied Jallot.

"But they have played here for weeks and given entire satisfaction. I do not think your play should offer greater obstacles to an artist than those of Voltaire, for instance."

"No, Monsieur, it does not. Rouquette and his friends in the company are deliberately misinterpreting their rôles. Shortly before the rise of the curtain, I had an encounter with the leading man, and this is the way he requites me."

Trudeau looked at the dramatist doubtfully.

"There were witnesses, Monsieur," said Jallot. "I shall refer you to Mademoiselle Rémy and Liotau."

"It is very unfortunate," grumbled the director, stroking his double chin.

"It is outrageous!" exclaimed Ottilie; "and Monsieur Osbourne agrees with me. Do you not?" she asked, appealing to the American.

"Without a doubt," he rejoined promptly. "Even I could see that Rouquette was acting ab-

"THE GATEWAY OF DREAMS"

ominably. I believe that Jallot, himself, could play the part better."

"I should hope so," sneered the author.

Ottilie clasped her hands and impulsively gasped, "What an idea! Monsieur Jallot might take this wretched player's place and finish the play himself."

"Impossible!" declared Trudeau. "Monsieur Jallot is not an actor."

"That would not deter me in the least," retorted the playwright. "What must be done, can be done!"

"Bravo!" ejaculated Osbourne.

"But it is too late to make the change now, even if Monsieur should be able to play the part," objected the director.

"Not at all," Ottilie insisted. "There is still an act to be played, and if it were well done, the whole performance might be turned into a success."

"An excellent idea," put in Osbourne, "if Jallot would dare undertake the part at such short notice."

Jallot took this as a sort of challenge, replying sharply, "I know every line. It only remains for Monsieur Trudeau to use whatever authority he may possess—"

"Papa, you must!" The girl, laying an appealing hand upon her father's arm, entreated him to arrange matters so that Jallot might take the

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT.

place of Rouquette.

"My dear, how is it possible? I do not wish to humiliate the actor, although—"

Ottilie interrupted him. "It is perfectly simple. You announce from the stage that Rouquette has been taken ill suddenly, and that another actor has graciously consented to go on in his stead. Now hurry, both of you, or you will be too late."

Used to giving his daughter her way, Trudeau made no further objection, but bidding Jallot, who was now all eagerness, to follow him, started in the direction of the stage.

Ottilie looked after them with satisfaction, and gleefully remarked, "Fancy the chagrin of Rouquette!"

"What a vengeful little lady you are," laughed the American. "I should always wish you to be on my side. My friend Jallot is very lucky to have you for his champion."

She laughed back at him daintily. "I did not think that an American could be so—so amiable. I am inclined to like you—because you call Monsieur Jallot your friend."

Osbourne's big blue eyes glowed down upon her. He was frankly pleased, though a trifle embarrassed. "I—I am his friend," he stammered.

"How fortunate you are! I wish I were a man that I, too, might claim friendship with Monsieur Jallot; but I am a woman, and though I revolt in

"THE GATEWAY OF DREAMS"

my heart, I must observe a certain convention in the selection of my intimates, while even some of the most straight-laced of our men may make a companion of Monsieur, so long as they do not take him home with them. Ah, if he were only a pirate, for instance, instead of a barber!" Otilie sighed with a pretty air of melancholy. "Why is he a barber?" she asked suddenly.

"Perhaps he was born one."

"No, no!" she positively asserted. "His manner, his speech—oh, and his hands—have you noticed his hands?—No, he was not born a barber."

Scattered exclamations, which became a general murmur, attracted their attention.

"Look, Monsieur!" cried Otilie; "my lovely papa is obeying instructions!"

Trudeau was stepping out on the stage in front of the curtain to inform the audience that Rouquette had been stricken with illness. He begged their indulgence for the inexperienced actor, who, without preparation, had consented to take the place of the leading man. This announcement was received with applause, because the *jeune premier* was no favorite; and the house began to speculate upon the identity of the debutant.

Meanwhile Trudeau rejoined his daughter. "You have involved me in an awkward affair, my dear," said he, shaking his great head ruefully. "Rouquette was furious. He handed me his resignation."

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"So much the better!" Thereupon, Otilie gave a nod and a smile to Osbourne, and, taking her father's arm, led him to the directors' box, where they had scarcely seated themselves, when the curtain rose.

Jallot was recognized the instant that he entered upon the scene, but he received no greeting other than ejaculations of surprise and a solitary hiss from the balcony where Rouquette sulked. For a few moments the actors could not be heard on account of the comment of the audience, who for the most part severely criticised the dramatist's audacity.

Said one, "First we are inflicted with his play; now we must endure his acting."

"Let us go," suggested another.

"No," laughed a third; "this promises to be highly amusing."

"There is nothing of the actor about that man," grumbled an old Creole.

"You are mistaken," returned his feminine companion; "Jallot is fascinating."

It soon, indeed, became apparent to the most biased mind that the comedy would have proved more palatable if Jallot had played the part throughout the performance. While he was without experience as a player, he nevertheless possessed a natural aptitude for dramatic expression, a charm of manner, an earnestness and a buoyancy, which, together with an appearance at

"THE GATEWAY OF DREAMS"

once debonair and distinguished, won the admiration and sympathy of his auditors in spite of their prejudice. They presently forgot to think of him as "the barber," and he became to them the bright image of romance in the person of the Marquis of Mirth, whose gay laughter echoed through the Courts of Gloom, turning sorrow into joy, and who chose the lowliest of all for his very own.

Jallot's enthusiasm was contagious. Players and spectators contracted it. The act moved with fervor and even brilliancy. He snatched victory from the clutch of defeat; and, when the curtain fell, the house called him out that there might be no question of his triumph.

While the theatre reverberated with applause and cries of "bravo!" one woman at least sat still, making no demonstration. Her delicate hands were clasped tightly, her great velvety black eyes were fixed upon Jallot, now bowing before the curtain. As he raised his head he met that compelling gaze, and in all the audience saw only that one woman. Whether hers was a glance of sympathy, or a look of admiration, he could not tell, though he thought much upon it, for he had but to shut his eyes to see hers again.

The people were rising to leave the playhouse, and still the woman sat there with hands clasped, gazing at the place where she had last seen Jallot.

"The play is over, Antoinette," said the old

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

German impatiently.

"Your scarf, Mademoiselle!" Gazonac draped the mantle about her shoulders.

"Do you know of any one who could give me fencing lessons, Monsieur?" she asked, abruptly, rising.

"Well, there's Planton!" he suggested.

"Planton!" sneered Froebel. "He to Jallot cannot be compared!"

"But there must be some one else," insisted Antoinette.

"You might study with Dalcourt," ventured the Frenchman.

"I tell you this, Antoinette, if you have into your head taken the idea that you wish to fence, you shall no lessons take from anybody but Jallot!" Her guardian was evidently not to be crossed in this matter.

"As you wish, *mon père*," sighed Antoinette, like one yielding a point with great reluctance. "I shall obey you and take lessons of Monsieur Jallot."

CHAPTER II

MADEMOISELLE OF THE MAGNOLIAS

Ludwig Froebel lived in the aristocratic Faubourg St. Jean on the Bayou Road, which was a continuation of the Rue du Maine. His villa, known as "The Magnolias," with its red-tiled roof and yellow plastered walls, broad verandas and pilastered doorways, stood within a grove of evergreen. A thick hedge of Spanish dagger, weighted with white taper-like blossoms, screened it from the road; and a fantastically grilled gate gave entrance to an arched avenue of magnolias, which flowered to the threshold. There was something inviting about the appearance of the villa. The latticed windows looked down upon the visitor with a friendly expression, while the wide porticoes spoke of hospitality. The back of the mansion, which faced the south, was even more picturesque. There, the second story, extending far over the base, was supported by roughly masoned pillars, about which clustered jasmine in fragrant abundance, forming a sort of bower. Beyond its shade lay a parterre of cherokee roses, fringed around with lilies; and beyond

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

that, where the evergreens thinned, an orchard in blossoming time sweetened the soft air with the spicy incense of orange, fig and pomegranate. Over all spread the golden sunshine, glowing from a sky of turquoise blue.

For long years, none, save slaves, had trod the white-shelled paths or ministered to the flowers. Now all was changed. Antoinette, in the first bloom of womanhood, had returned from a ten years' exile in France, whither she had been sent to acquire an education more illuminating than that afforded by the young city of New Orleans. She brought to the house of the widowed German the glorious touch of femininity which made it sought as ardently as ever was Colchos strand.

Antoinette had been home from abroad but a month, yet the Jasons were already come in quest of her, only to find her guarded more jealously than was the golden fleece. An elderly but vigorous colored *bonne*, Caresse, served the girl as maid and protectress, never leaving her unattended, save when Froebel, himself, became her escort. Antoinette, brought up under the strict surveillance of convent life, accepted the service of Caresse as a queen might a guard of honor. Indeed, she possessed a gracious air of sovereignty, which was as innate as her loveliness. Something in the poise of her head, the graceful movement of her tall, supple, delicately modeled figure, a gesture—bringing into play a beautifully

MADemoiselle OF THE MAGNOLIAS

proportioned arm and an expressive hand, finished with long, pink-tipped fingers—gave the impression of a woman bred to rule. And rule she did those happy, lucky mortals—foster-father, lovers, friends and slaves—who formed the court she held in the Villa of the Magnolias on the old Bayou Road.

There, before the low fire in the open hallway, sat Antoinette on the afternoon immediately following the night of Victor Jallot's triumph at the Théâtre Saint Pierre. Her seat was a great Florentine chair, cushioned in red; and her head-rest, its high carved back. Her hands showed white against the dark arms of her throne, and the tips of her slippers looked out from beneath her white gown to rest upon a footstool. The faint glow of the fire softly illuminated her delicate features, and made lights in her sombre hair.

About the girl, in various attitudes of adoration, gathered three young men, and within eye-shot, ensconced on the window-seat at the first turn of the stairs, sat Caresse, sewing.

Bits of the conversation floated up to her. They were discussing "The Gateway of Dreams" and its author. In fact, Antoinette had adroitly led them on to this subject.

"In Paris," she was saying, "I was in the habit of exercising, but since my return home I have neglected the practice. So I thought that fencing would be an interesting means of keeping me

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

in good health."

Her court smiled at this, and she smiled back, for while there was scarcely a breath of color in the clear ivory of her cheeks, there was every evidence of a constitution abounding in youthful vigor.

"My father," she went on, "insists, since I have made up my mind to be energetic, that I should employ Monsieur Jallot as my *maitre d'armes*. He seems to have a high regard for this versatile person, notwithstanding that the gentleman maintains a barber's establishment. I should have thought that a man, possessed of the talents which Monsieur Jallot has displayed, must have some reason for his curious, and—to me—incongruous employment."

"There is something in being the best barber in New Orleans, I suppose," remarked one, tentatively.

"That is my father's opinion," continued Antoinette. "He tells me that the 'Atelier Jallot,' which I believe is the name Monsieur le Barbier has bestowed upon his shop, is the fashionable tonsorial establishment of the city; that its patrons are all people of the best families; that you may with perfect propriety visit the atelier for the purpose of having your hair dressed, or for instruction in dancing or fencing or even deportment. I am further informed that Monsieur handles a foil with as much skill as he wields a razor,

MADemoiselle OF THE MAGNOLIAS

and that he is as expert in the dance as he is happy in the composition of verse. According to my father, who has patronized his shop for many years, this barber is amiable, witty and wise; in short, a kind of paragon."

"A paragon? Yes, if you admire that sort," put in another with a grimace.

"That is the point," resumed the girl. "While I confess to great veneration for my father's opinion, I am constrained to think that he may be less fit to judge of the character and accomplishments of this gentleman-barber than any one of you, who, at various times, must have encountered him. Perhaps you will be good enough to enlighten me further as to his personality and ability, for, since I must of necessity accept him as an instructor in fencing, if I am to fence at all, I would know more of him."

The three men listened attentively to Antoinette, if not to her words, certainly to the sound of her voice, which fell upon their willing ears in soft cadences. To the poesy of her speech was added the fascination of her face, which mirrored her thoughts in ever-changing, animated expressions. Through her brilliant red lips flashed the whitest of teeth, and her great velvety dark eyes, imperial mysteries, compelled their admiration.

"Now you, Monsieur Gazonac," she demanded of the belligerent-looking Frenchman, who bore

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

a scar across his cheek, and whose cold, steely glance met her questioning look unflinchingly; "surely can tell me something of Monsieur Jallot, because I remember last night, when I had no reason to be interested in this gentleman, that you volunteered some remarks, which made me think that the barber might not be the paragon he is pictured."

"Oh," he exclaimed derisively, without shifting his gaze, "Jallot is a very good barber, and an excellent dancing master; a diplomatic fellow, who hoodwinks the unknowing into thinking him a model of virtue, and who aspires to the society of those whom he is only fit to shave."

"A rather negative endorsement," commented Antoinette, and turned her attention to an extremely tall, thin and sallow Creole of about forty, who was fastidiously taking a pinch of snuff. "Monsieur Villebois, what is your estimate of Monsieur Jallot?" she quizzed, giving him a smile, which had the effect of a shock. He sat bolt upright, and, extending a long arm, in the way of an emphatic gesture, declared, "Jallot is a genius! He can shave you without a scratch, kill you without a fluke, and write your epitaph without a dictionary!" A grin slit the speaker's thin face, as though it had been cut with a knife.

"What an exceedingly amiable portrait you draw of your genius," she laughed lightly. "Let me

MADEMOISELLE OF THE MAGNOLIAS

hope that Monsieur Lemaitre will be more reassuring."

"Reassuring?" ejaculated Villebois, his small green eyes widening in mock wonder. "Mademoiselle, I claim that I have given him a superb character, providing, of course, that you are really seeking a *maitre d'armes* and not a majordomo."

Antoinette, affecting not to hear this remark, appealed to the youngest of the three—a handsome, gaily dressed Creole, whose curly black hair rendered pale his proud face, which habitually wore a petulant expression. "Monsieur Lemaitre, do you know this barber?"

"Intimately," he confessed. "I have known him for a long time, and I assure you that he is a most amusing person. I have seen him juggle six eggs at once without breaking one, and before my very eyes turn them into as many cakes of soap."

"There is no doubt then," she mocked, "that, as Monsieur Villebois claims, he is a genius; but what of his character?"

"A genius has no need of a character," maintained Villebois, fondly stroking down the nap of his beaver as though it were the fur of a favorite cat. "His every fault and eccentricity, each having its halo, make him appear as a saint exiled from paradise. That is why women adore geniuses!"

Antoinette gave a little laugh. "How cunning you are in laying bare our foibles, Monsieur. I

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

dare say that you are as familiar with my heart, for instance, as you are with your breviary."

"Quite," derided Gazonac, glad of an opportunity to rap the knuckles of his acknowledged rival. "For my part, I confess to knowing nothing about women, but I give them the credit of having too much pride to place a halo about the head of a barber. And were I asked if Jallot were the man to instruct Mademoiselle in fencing, I should say 'no' and recommend her to Planton!"

"Yes, Planton is excellent! He taught me," boasted Lemaitre.

"Which should be enough to induce Mademoiselle to study with Jallot," chuckled Villebois.

"I think I shall take your advice, Monsieur," said Antoinette, with a smile; "because—I am obliged to, anyway."

After this Villebois took to plaguing Lemaitre about his fencing, and the young Creole, not relishing the laughter raised at his expense, and having none but a friendly interest in Antoinette, presently departed. Then Gazonac and Villebois, each growing more furious as the other persistently tarried, exchanged a look of understanding and went out together, as though by common consent they had agreed upon that policy; but when they reached the road, the Creole, professing to have left his snuff-box behind, excused himself and returned to the villa, a maneuver which did not deceive Gazonac in the least.

MADemoisELLE OF THE MAGNOLIAs

Villebois found Antoinette where he had left her, gazing thoughtfully into the fire. "Mademoiselle," he began, "I left something behind. It is a thing, however, which I do not wish to take away, and I am emboldened to speak of it, for the reason that it seemed to me that you—"

He stopped short, as she looked up at him in mild amazement. He had set out to do the thing, and, though he could now perceive no encouragement in her glance, he persisted. "It—it was my—my heart," he stammered.

"Ah," she exclaimed merrily, "I will have Caresse look for it; and if she finds it, I will post it to you in the morning."

"Thank you, Mademoiselle," grinned Villebois in a crestfallen fashion; "but I ventured to hope that you—"

"It is dangerous to hope for anything from me, but I scarcely need tell you that, since no doubt you read—"

"My dismissal in your look?"

She smiled enigmatically.

"Then to the bitter end," he announced. "I am a Creole, Mademoiselle, and my family is a proud one; but I humble myself before you, and entreat you to have mercy—for surely one so beautiful—"

"Hush," she warned; "Caresse will hear!"

"I am not so stupid that I do not know when I have been honored with the mitten. In this extremity I have one satisfaction: I am now eligi-

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

ble to that coterie known as 'The Rejected of Mademoiselle of the Magnolias.' "

Antoinette started up, frowningly. "Someone has taken a great liberty!"

"Some one? No, Mademoiselle, some six, at least!—philosophers all, who, next best to being loved by you, esteem themselves happy in having been dismissed by you," he concluded with a humorous flourish.

"Hah," he soliloquized, as he walked down the path, "I wish I had forgotten to forget my snuff-box!"

CHAPTER III

IN THE ATELIER JALLOT

Down the Bayou went Froebel with Antoinette swinging on his arm like an ornament, and playfully keeping step with him as he twirled his cane after the fashion of a beau. He was exceedingly proud of the girl and showed it in the way he looked down at her through his gold-rimmed goggles, while she returned his admiring glances with smiles as exhilarating as the morning.

They were walking in the direction of the city, which lay all red and yellow in the bright December sunshine, about a third of a mile away. The air was soft and clear, the footway dry, and their spirits light, so that they took pleasure in every step and kept up an animated dialogue, for Antoinette, still strange to New Orleans, was full of questioning.

Their way led them past stately villas, set far back from the road and hemmed in with low walls, topped by grills or hedges of wild orange and pittosporum. Graceful crepe myrtles, cedars and cypresses, cast violet shadows over the walk, and every breath of air brought whiffs of roses.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

As they approached the Rue Dauphine, the outpost of the city proper, the villas gave way to irregular rows of houses, for the Bayou Road, there—at the crossing of the canal—became the Rue du Maine; and instead of scattered pedestrians, they encountered the lazy life of a port just beginning to respond to the energetic undertakings of Americans.

Here, on the one side, was a Spanish cottage with mottled walls, one story high, and a crazy tiled roof; on the other, perhaps, an arcade front to a more pretentious structure, the lower floor occupied as a shop and the upper as a dwelling. Again, a strange lop-sided domicile with peaked roof and balconies, leaned wearily against a lowly neighbor built of stuccoed brick and boasting a terrace. Through an arch they caught a glimpse of a courtyard, rimmed around with galleries, and set out with fig and orange trees in stone jars; while further on, at the corner of the Rue Royale, stood the Marquis of Casa Calvo's house, an imposing edifice, with many balconies and a belvedere.

In spite of their irregularity, or may be on account of it, the rows of shops and dwellings presented a picturesque appearance. All of them were more or less decorated with stucco work and grills, and their white and yellow plastered walls, softened and stained by the weather, gave them a certain richness of tone against the wonderful blue

IN THE ATELIER JALLOT

of that tropical sky. Flowers were everywhere, gaily coloring the terraces, balconies and casements.

"How intimate the houses seem," exclaimed Antoinette; "how happily neighbored; the doors all opening so invitingly; balcony smiling at gallery, terrace reaching out to arcade; all so close, so friendly. I am sure that the good people who live in them must be devotees of the golden rule."

"That very much depends, my dear, whether you have, yourself, a grandmother who laced the stays of Marie Antoinette, or a grandfather who the sword of the Bloody O'Reilly sharpened," grunted Froebel.

He came to a halt a few doors from the Rue Chartres and pointed to an arched portal of lime-washed stucco, overhung with a grilled balcony, which fairly blazed with poppies. "Here it is—the Atelier Jallot," he announced.

Entering, they found themselves in a wide passage—the vestibule, to a spacious court, open to the sun, which cast the fantastic shadows of gallery, arcade and eave over the tiled pavement, and set the lazy fountain with a huge opal. Directly across the court, and under a gallery, stood a great double door of oak, ornamented with heavy iron hinges, a small grating and a ponderous knocker, which Froebel now used vigorously.

His summons was answered by a dapper little quadroon, in a pale green coat and snuff colored

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

breeches, who, at the sight of the merchant and the girl, smiled broadly. In a melodious patois he bade them enter, saying that Monsieur Jallot was giving Mademoiselle Trudeau a fencing lesson, but that he would wait upon them presently. With that he ushered the visitors into a large room well lighted at the further end by a high arched window, through which they caught glimpses of a garden. Near this window stood a tonsor chair, and a table, bearing a mirror and the paraphernalia of a barber. Arched doorways on each side broke the monotony of the immaculate yellow walls, hung here and there with foils and swords, rows of fencing masks and leather breastplates, all suggesting an armory rather than an atelier.

In the centre of the room Jallot and Otilie Trudeau were fencing, while, from a bench against the wall, Tonton, a pretty octeroon girl, Mademoiselle's maid, looked on with interest. She rose immediately upon the entrance of Antoinette and Froebel and remained standing.

Jallot, seeing the visitors at the door, excused himself to Otilie, and removing his fencing mask, advanced to greet them. Within a few paces of Antoinette, he stopped short, like one challenged suddenly in the dark. As a matter of fact he was challenged, though not by a voice. For an instant his fancy carried him back upon the stage of the Théâtre Saint Pierre and he was looking into a pair of velvety eyes. He closed his as if to dispel

IN THE ATELIER JALLOT

the illusion, but saw it only the more vividly. He looked again. They were the same eyes, but with this difference: they gazed upon him with imperial unconcern.

"Extraordinary!" he thought, bowing.

Froebel spoke. "Jallot, this is my daughter, Antoinette. It was about her that I talked to you regarding the lessons."

The girl acknowledged the introduction with a pretty inclination of her head, not intended to be particularly cordial. The barber bowed again. "I shall be happy to instruct Mademoiselle."

Otilie, who had taken off her mask, now came toward Antoinette, holding out her hand. "Mademoiselle Froebel, I hope you will remember me!"

"Of course, Mademoiselle Trudeau," exclaimed the other, shaking the proffered hand warmly. "I did not recognize you behind your mask. How beautifully you fence!"

The Creole girl dimpled and gave Jallot a grateful look. "If I do," she returned, "it is because I have such an admirable master."

Jallot made a gay gesture of protest.

"Did I not tell you, my dear," submitted Froebel, addressing himself to his daughter, "that he was a master?"

The *maitre d'armes* smiled in modest toleration and inquired whether Antoinette had ever used a foil.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

Before she could reply, Otilie questioned her enthusiastically: "Are you come to take lessons in fencing, Mademoiselle?"

"I am going to study dancing," responded Antoinette. She had seen how gracefully the pretty Creole had handled her foil, and abandoned at once all thought of fencing, deciding upon an exercise in which she would at least appear at equal advantage with Otilie.

Jallot turned to her in some surprise, and Froebel gasped, "Dancing?"

"Precisely, *mon père*," she persisted amiably; "what else did you think?"

"Fencing and nothing else," asseverated the merchant.

Antoinette gazed at him, assuming an expression of wonder, and exclaimed: "What a curious mistake! Monsieur Jallot does not teach dancing?"

"Certainly," the barber hastened to assure her.

"But you to dance already know how," objected the bewildered German.

Jallot came to the girl's rescue. "There are many steps and figures, which Mademoiselle, however accomplished she may be, could not have learned in France, for here, as you know, we have dances unfamiliar to Paris."

"And no one knows them so well as Monsieur Jallot," put in Otilie.

"Then it is settled," announced Antoinette. "I

IN THE ATELIER JALLOT

should like to take two or three lessons every week, if Monsieur can spare the time."

"I shall make the time, Mademoiselle!"

"Then let it be on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at eleven. Will that be satisfactory, Monsieur?"

"Entirely so! When do you wish to begin?"

"The day after to-morrow!"

"That is Wednesday, the twenty-first of the month," reflected the methodical merchant, and then signalled Antoinette his desire to go.

"I wish that you would let me be friends with you," confided Ottilie, impulsively taking Antoinette's hand.

"Rather permit me to offer my friendship for yours," she rejoined graciously. So they exchanged kisses and addresses; and Antoinette left the Atelier Jallot even more happily than she had entered it.

"You are very fortunate in securing such a charming pupil, Monsieur," commented Ottilie, as she resumed her mask.

"Indeed I am, if she prove half so faithful as you, Mademoiselle."

The Creole girl mocked him with a low courtesy and a foolish flourish of her foil. "I shall remind you of that compliment when next you scold me. Come! My wrist is well rested. *En garde!*"

They were concluding the lesson when Poupet—Jallot's little quadroom assistant—announced

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

that Osbourne was at the door.

"Tell him I regret that I can receive no one until noon. At that hour, if he will be so kind as to return, I shall be glad to see him," said Jallot.

"Wait," commanded Otilie, as Poupet turned away; she appealed to her fencing master: "Is this the American gentleman I met at the theatre?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle!"

"Then I should not object to meeting him again."

"But it is against my rules. Between eleven and one, the hours I reserve for my private pupils, I see no one except by appointment. Besides, it is not fitting that I should exhibit you to every stranger who knocks at my atelier."

"Fiddlesticks!" laughed Otilie. "Show Monsieur in, Poupet!"

The quadroon bowed, but stood still, his eyes on Jallot, who shrugged his shoulders and said: "Obey Mademoiselle!"

At a sign from Otilie, her maid relieved her of mask and shield, and threw a scarf over her shoulders. When Osbourne entered he found the girl drawing on her lace mittens.

"I hope I have not interrupted your lesson, Mademoiselle," he began.

She shook her head. "I was just going when you came," she smiled glowingly.

"I am glad I came, then—that I may thank you

IN THE ATELIER JALLOT

—and I presume I do owe you thanks—for the invitation to share your window at the Hotel de Ville—?”

“My father invited you?” Otilie affected great surprise. “How extraordinary! I mean—how delightful!”

“You did not know?” puzzled Osbourne.

“How should I? Though I am happy to think that my papa should have so far overcome his prejudice against Americans as to include you in our party.”

“It is a pretty compliment,” he rejoined. “Don’t you think so, Jallot?”

The master turned from the rack, where he was putting up his foil, and replied, “I should say it was, since the ceremony, which you are invited to witness, means the transfer of Louisiana to the United States, and one which cannot but cause further resentment in the hearts of all Creoles against all Americans.”

“For that very reason,” confessed Osbourne, “I am in doubt as to the propriety of accepting Monsieur Trudeau’s courteous invitation.”

“You must accept it,” Otilie insisted. “Must he not, Monsieur Jallot?”

“Without a doubt! The acceptance of such a courtesy on the part of an American may do something toward the fostering of friendliness.” Jallot smiled a little as he spoke.

“I shall accept!” announced the American. This

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

with a glowing look at Ottilie, who dimpled and returned:

"Monsieur Osbourne, I shall never again, even in my thoughts, call you a barbarian!"

With a smile for one man and a courtesy for the other, she turned to her maid. "Come, Tonton!" she said, and flitted out of the atelier.

"It is curious," resumed the American, when the door closed on Ottilie, "but I came here for the very purpose of asking you something about Mademoiselle Trudeau."

Jallot threw off his leather jacket and, slipping into the coat which Poupet held for him, waved Osbourne to the window-seat and dismissed his assistant.

These two men had known each other for about a year, and in that time they had developed an alliance of genuine affection. The American had, with native broad-mindedness, accepted the Frenchman for what he was, finding in him a kindred spirit, a man whose intellect was far above the station which he seemed to occupy so tenaciously. From the first, Jallot was attracted by Osbourne's sincerity and frankness, and, as their intimacy flowered, he became less reserved, discovering in his friend fine sensibilities, though a somewhat sluggish wit and a lack of imagination.

"To begin with," said Jallot, assuming a comfortable position opposite his intimate; "I see that

IN THE ATELIER JALLOT.

you are about to fall in love with Mademoiselle Trudeau."

Osbourne started in surprise. "I have no intention of doing so," he protested.

"Love is not a matter of intention," laughed the Frenchman; "it is the work of Fate in her most mischievous mood."

The American considered the idea for a moment, then, squaring his broad shoulders against the casement, rejoined: "According to your definition, a warning is futile."

"Quite right, my friend," beamed Jallot. "I spoke on the impulse to save you; but I cannot. You have looked into a pair of brown eyes, you have pondered upon a pair of red lips! You are lost! There is no help! Go, be miserable!"

"Will you be serious," entreated Osbourne; "and tell me why I must 'go, be miserable,' granting that I am in love."

Jallot laughed a little. "Now there's a fine confession for you! You are in an exceedingly bad way. You will be miserable; but let us take the case philosophically, and the worst may not seem so ill as it promises. Mademoiselle Trudeau is betrothed to Etienne Lemaitre."

"That Creole fop!" ejaculated the American, whose face reflected his disappointment at this intelligence. "Is it considered a good match?" he asked, with a show of indifference.

"It is thought so, I believe, by both their

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

families, who settled the matter for them long ago. From what I have seen of Mademoiselle I should say that she regards Lemaitre with affection."

"And he?"

"It is a passion with him, if I am any judge of men. He is jealous, even of me. He comes here while she takes her lessons, and sits watching us. He has tried to induce her to study with Planton; but she, like her father, is very loyal to me."

"Was Lemaitre here to-day?"

"No, nor has he been for a week; and he was not at the theatre the other night. I think they must have had a quarrel, which happens every now and then, but he always comes back and patches it up. At least that is what I hear from Poupet, who gets his news from Mademoiselle's maid."

At that moment Lemaitre, himself, entered the atelier unannounced. He glanced hurriedly about and, seeing Jallot on the window-seat, inquired in a peremptory manner, "Has Mademoiselle Trudeau been here this morning?"

"Yes," replied the barber without shifting his position.

"Hum!" muttered the Creole, striking the floor impatiently with his sword-cane and wheeling about to the door. There he paused and addressed Jallot again. "I am going to have some friends to dinner at the Tivoli to-night. Now what

IN THE ATELIER JALLOT

would you charge me to come in afterward and amuse us with juggling?"

"Nothing!"

"You mean to say—?"

"I mean to say that I do not hire myself out as a mountebank, Monsieur!" Jallot was on his feet.

"*Morbleu!*" gasped Lemaitre, "what airs you are giving yourself since you had that play produced!"

"Ah, you've observed that, have you?" returned the barber coolly; "then I would also call your attention to the knocker on my door. If you should come again—use it, for I am not always amiable to intruders."

The Creole laughed derisively. "It is not likely that I shall intrude again," he said, with a look toward Osbourne; "as your shop has become the rendezvous of the *canaille*." Delivering this shot, he made a hasty exit.

"I should like to wring that dandy's neck," exclaimed the American with heat.

"Don't bother," advised Jallot; "someone will attend to that for you one of these days; and, in the meantime, since you are really in love with his fiancée, I should suggest your marrying her."

Osbourne started at his companion in amazement. "You mean that?"

"I was never more in earnest."

"But how can it be done—under the circumstances? It seems impossible."

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"It may seem so, but it isn't; not if you make up your mind to succeed," declared Jallot. "Of course it will be difficult, particularly as your part is simply to await the psychological moment."

"The psychological moment?" grumbled Osbourne. "What is it and when will it come?" His tone was mocking.

Jallot looked at him with a whimsical expression. "I haven't the slightest idea; but I shall know when it comes and warn you, if you do not chance to recognize it yourself."

"Jallot, you are mad!"

"I hope so, my dear fellow, if to be sane should mean that I must be as hopelessly stupid as you Americans."

CHAPTER IV

JALLOT OVERHEARS AN INTRIGUE AND THINKS A RHYME

At nine o'clock the next morning, Jallot dismissed Poupet for the day, closed the atelier and walked briskly through the Rue Chartres, which was filled with people all hurrying in the same direction. Their destination was the Place d'Armes, whither they were bound to witness the military ceremonies coincident with the formal transfer of Louisiana to the United States.

It was a picturesque scene which greeted the eyes of the barber when he reached the Rue Ste. Anne and found a great and motley crowd already assembled about a broad, rectangular plot of ground, in the centre of which stood a flag-staff bearing for the last time the tri-colors of France. Facing the Rue Chartres was the St. Louis Cathedral, flanked on one side by the Hotel de Ville and on the other by its twin structure, the quarters of the Capuchins. Jallot enjoyed the friendship of the monks, and had been invited by one of the order to watch the ceremonies from their balcony. He pushed his way through the throng to this haven, and from its

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

gallery, where he was cordially welcomed, presently looked down upon the multi-colored crowd about the plaza.

Along the Rue Ste. Anne—before a row of brick stores, gay with striped awnings—stood the militia in brave uniforms of scarlet. Directly opposite them, in the press around the little charity hospital, Jallot saw a great yellow-brown patch—a band of American woodsmen in leather tunics and coon-skin caps. Hemming them about were the chapeaux and tall beavers of Creoles and French, the tinselled sombreros of the Spanish, and here and there, even the feathery head-dress of an Indian; while on every side, adding bright notes of color, were the gaudy turbans of negroes.

Looking over this fantastic drift of heads and faces, Jallot's eyes were held by a file of bannerets—the flag-topped masts of the merchant fleet, moored at the levee—in silhouette against the azure lights of the morning sky. He could not but mark the serenity of the heavens in contrast with the excitement of the crowd in the Place d'Armes.

The people gathered there were by no means certain what the day might bring forth. It was only three weeks since the colony had been a province of Spain, and although in the interim, it had passed back into the possession of France, the Spanish were still strong in numbers and influence; and the word had gone about that the

JALLOT OVERHEARS AN INTRIGUE

Marquis of Casa Calvo, once King Carlos' governor of Louisiana and now his commissioner, had leagued with the foreign element of the colony in some form of treachery against the incoming government.

In that great throng, assembled about the plaza, there were few, other than the Americans, who would not have applauded any outbreak against the representatives of the young republic, which was presently to become the ruler of their destiny.

There was a sense of nervous tension in the air and even Jallot, who felt more like a spectator than an actor in this national drama, started at the boom of a cannon, which announced the coming of the American troops from their camp beyond the city. The guns of Fort St. Charles, firing a salute, gave warning that the American commissioners, Governor Claiborne and General Wilkinson, were passing through the Tchoupitoulas Gate. Their escort, a company of troops—improvised for the occasion by Monsieur Laussat, the French Colonial Prefect—soon made its appearance, followed by the American officials and their detachments of dragoons, infantry and artillery—a brilliant pageant, but a hateful one in the eyes of the people of Louisiana.

Their reception, as they drew up along the Rue St. Pierre side of the plaza, was not enthusiastic, for the Americans alone raised their voices to cheer. More sullen still was the attitude of the

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

crowd when Governor Claiborne, having presented his credentials to Laussat, and received from him the keys of the city, appeared upon the balcony of the Hotel de Ville to watch the descent of the French flag and the raising of the banner of the United States.

As the colors of these two nations met midway on the great flag staff, their silken folds touching each other with a caress, a single gun brayed out, and then fort and battery, plaza and harbor, reverberated with answering salutes. High up now, and flung valiantly to the breeze, fluttered the stars and stripes; while below, a guard of honor received the tri-color, which never more should show its bars over the colony: Louisiana had become a part of the United States of America!

As the little procession, bearing the French colors, with solemn tread passed through the crowds to the Hotel de Ville, heads uncovered, troops presented arms, and Jallot, who looked across to the balcony of the government house, saw women wipe their eyes.

Among the company there he picked out old Froebel and his daughter; Trudeau, Ottilie and Osbourne; and he fancied for a moment that Antoinette turned her face to him, but he could not be sure that she recognized him across the broad façade of the cathedral, which lay between them.

The bright picture of the Place d'Armes, with

JALLOT OVERHEARS AN INTRIGUE

its wonderful patchwork of colors; the arms and accoutrements of the soldiery, flashing under the sheen of the noonday sun; the murmurings and mutterings of the throngs, topped by the shouts of the Americans and the blatant notes of the bands—were all lost to Jallot. For the moment, his gaze was fastened upon the far horizon, as though he sought to solve some mystery of the great beyond.

A hint of future influence even then lay in wait for him at the portal of the monastery. As he paused outside the gateway, he noticed a knot of men crowding up in an angle of the wall close to where he stood. The tail-end of a whispered ejaculation caught his ear. The words were, "A new empire!" Listening more attentively, for the phrase struck him as significant, he heard one say, "Delicado has a large force under arms in Florida." Again, "We depend upon Casa Calvo." That was all, because they moved away and were soon lost in the swirl of many people.

Jallot wondered what the meaning of these fragments might be, but presently dismissed them from his mind as merely the idle gossip of irresponsible men, and went on his way, thinking of a rhyme to Antoinette.

CHAPTER V

A GENTLEMAN IN MOTLEY

Jallot was much more a man of affairs than even the exercise of his various crafts indicated. He was sitting before a secretary in his cabinet, which looked out upon the garden, and with the assistance of Poupet was despatching such business as had accumulated over the holiday. The morning post had brought a solicitation from the editor of "*Le Moniteur de la Louisiane*" for a poem; a demand from Rouquette, the player, for satisfaction on account of "insulting remarks;" a dainty note, saying that the writer was in the habit of driving her volante alone through the Tchoupitoulas Gate at sundown every day when the streets were passable; an application for a loan from old De Neville, who was ill and in want; an invitation from Osbourne to dine at The Pig and Whistle; an appreciation of his play from a feminine pen; requests for appointments for dancing and fencing lessons; and a wealth of minor matters pertaining to the administration of his ménage.

"Poupet, you have not called upon Monsieur De Neville," exclaimed Jallot sharply, taking up what he considered the most urgent business. The

A GENTLEMAN IN MOTLEY

little quadroon hung his head. "Very well, I shall go myself. You should not have allowed me to neglect him, unless you were looking after him yourself. Fancy how it must have hurt his pride to make this appeal! How is our exchequer?"

"We have only got whad is in you' wallet, Michié. You remember on Monday dad yo' pay de rend o' poor Madam Lourent."

"Then you must go to bank to-day!"

Poupet threw up his hands in despair. "Michié," he pleaded, "why fo' yo' do dad? What de use Ah go stick de money in, if yo' always go pull id oud?"

Jallot laughed. "You would make a miser of me, and already I am becoming disgustingly rich!"

"Michié, yo' got t' be reech if yo' like to do nottin' bud write."

"Very well, Poupet, this shall be the last time we draw upon that account!"

At this Poupet smiled unbelievably and handed him Rouquette's letter. "Ah suppose yo' got t' kill dad actor—*hein?*"

The barber tore the missive up. "No! I am too busy. . . . I must really do this poem for Editor Allard. . . . How is my time to-day?"

"Id bein' Wednesday dere iz sure to be Michié Dalcourt, Capitaine Girard and 'Sieur de Boutique; also posseblee Michié Trudeau to be shave."

"Good! You can attend to them all save Monsieur Trudeau. That will give me the whole

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

morning for the verses. I have no other appointments."

"Pardon, Michié, yo' have one at eleven!"

"Eleven—on Wednesday?"

Poupet, consulting a card, read: "Mamzelle Antoinette Froebel—dancin'."

Jallot laid down his quill. "Strange! I had forgotten!" After a moment's thought, he added: "Well, I shall have an hour and a half to myself. How is my afternoon?"

"Mamzelle Rémy come fo' fencin' at two. Den yo' have an appoindmend wid Pere Antoine 'boud de plans fo' de orphanage. At five, Michié Crozat, fo' his toilette. Dad iz all, 'less yo' accept Michié Osbourne's invite."

"I shall accept—"

He was interrupted by a knock at the court door of the atelier. "They are coming early to-day. Go, Poupet, and see that I am not disturbed, unless it should be by Monsieur Trudeau."

Left alone, Jallot picked up his pen and resolutely faced a sheet of blank paper; but with all the cudgeling of his brains, he could produce nothing that satisfied his critical taste. "It's clear that my muse has the sulks," he declared at last, and, looking at his watch, discovered that it was close to eleven o'clock.

After scrutinizing his dress he stepped into the atelier which looked as though it had emerged from a toilette as fastidious as that of its master

A GENTLEMAN IN MOTLEY

spirit. Foils and rapiers glistened in their racks, the sun came unmottled through the diamond panes of the great window and spread a gloss of gold over the polished floor. The incongruities of the barber chair and accompanying paraphernalia were hidden behind a lacquered screen at one end of the long room, and at the other, upon a raised stand, sat Poupet, who, scarcely less versatile than Monsieur, himself, was tuning a violin.

He stopped the next moment to answer a summons to the door, and admitted Trudeau. The old Creole advanced, or rather waddled, to Jallot with a broad smile upon his ruddy face and hand outstretched. "Hah," he exclaimed, pumping the barber's arm, "we have won! The directors of the theatre have agreed to give your play another hearing with Liotau in the *jeune premier's* rôle."

"That's good news, Monsieur; and I thank you for bringing it about. When does the play go on?"

"Not for a month or so; but then, if it succeeds, as we expect, there is no doubt that I can secure the presentation of your tragedy. Can you complete it by March?"

"No doubt, Monsieur."

"Excellent! Are you busy? I meant to be shaved."

Jallot consulted his watch. "I am sorry, but I am expecting a pupil. She should be here now."

"Hah! Very well! At four then!" Trudeau

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

wabbled to the door. As Jallot opened it for him, he saw Antoinette crossing the court with Caresse at her heels.

The girl came in with a radiant "*Bonjour, Monsieur!*" and, at the master's direction, passed into the dressing-room with her *bonne*. In a few moments she reappeared without her bonnet, displaying a dainty coiffure set off with a cap of Mechlin lace, trimmed with ribbons. Jallot's appreciative eyes at once took note of three poignant items, which at that moment seemed to make up the sum of his pupil's charm; the patrician slenderness of her features, the distinction with which she wore a gown of pink silk embroidered in rose-knots, and her small feet encased in black satin slippers moving bewitchingly beneath the ruffle of her skirt.

Under the mesmeric measure of Poupet's violin, the lesson began; and Mademoiselle proved to be an admirable pupil. There seemed to be a perfect understanding between her head and her feet, which mastered the strange steps as though directed by the very spirit of Terpsichore. There was grace and witchery in her simplest movement, whether she followed the master's instructions or not; and he thought how she excelled—in elegance, amiability and intelligence—the Creoles he taught.

Their conversation was all in the way of the art to which they were now devotees. Her sweet

A GENTLEMAN IN MOTLEY

voice lent a charm to the most commonplace phrase; and, whenever he stopped to explain some intricate step, the lively interest which shown in her dark eyes fascinated him.

"How is that, Monsieur?" she would inquire, finishing a movement, which, though graceful, was not in the least like the step he was teaching her. Then he would smile a little and reply:

"Very pretty! but, if Mademoiselle will permit me, I will call her attention to the fact that the position is—so!" and Jallot would illustrate. Once he could not restrain a little laugh of chagrin, and, looking up, caught a flash of anger in Antoinette's eyes.

"Mademoiselle," he hastened to explain, "I was merely laughing at myself, for the step which you improvised is far more graceful than mine."

He became so interested in his task that the hour fairly winged its flight, and it was long beyond the lesson's allotted time when Poupet, whose arms ached with fiddling, at last ventured to mutter: "Michié, id is afder twelve o'clock."

"I apologize, Mademoiselle," said Jallot; "but I lost count of time in the pleasure of instruction—you learn so readily!"

She made him a courtesy to acknowledge the compliment and thanked him for his patience. Thereafter she came regularly to the atelier, and, in the next two weeks, master and pupil became so happily acquainted that, at the conclusion of her

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

lesson, Antoinette often stopped to rest at the window-seat, where they would converse together like friends.

They were not friends; they were merely friendly. The girl, though all graciousness and interest, possessed an unconscious imperious air, which gave Jallot the impression that she was perhaps patronizing him. For his part, being naturally reserved about all that concerned him intimately, he withheld from her those confidences that make for friendship. Still, he had grown to look for her coming, and when she came it mattered not how his many interests pressed for attention, he was glad to have her stay for the gossip which had tacitly become a part of her tuition.

A month after Antoinette's first visit to the atelier, Ottilie, whom she now looked upon as her dearest companion, questioned her, saying: "Tell me, do you find that you are making satisfactory progress in your dancing?"

"Oh, yes! I have learned the most fascinating steps," she declared with enthusiasm. "Monsieur Jallot is a master."

"And what do you think of him?"

They were seated close together on a divan in Antoinette's boudoir, where they had been talking the afternoon through. A pearly light invaded the room. The day was growing dim across the open balcony.

"He is a mystery to me," Antoinette answered.

A GENTLEMAN IN MOTLEY

"But such an interesting mystery!"

"Ah, *chérie*, all mysteries are interesting. This one is particularly so. Here is a man—possessed of many talents, and, for aught I know, genius—who is at the same time a barber! Why?"

"Papa says it is stubbornness. He offered to—I think he called it 'finance'—yes!—to finance Monsieur Jallot so that he might give up his shop and devote himself to literature."

Antoinette smiled. "I should not call that stubbornness; I should say it was pride, and I admire Monsieur all the more for that. It is what I should have thought of him."

After a moment's pondering, Otilie exclaimed, "How handsome he is!"

"Do not let Monsieur Lemaitre hear you say that," teased her confidante.

"No, I would not dare say that of anyone before Etienne; but I repeat to you that Monsieur Jallot is handsome."

Antoinette shook her head. "You only think so because his features are fairly regular; his gray eyes, amiable; his voice, pleasant; his manner, noble; and his dress, correct."

"*Coton mai!*" retorted Otilie, "is not that enough to make a man handsome?"

"No, *chérie*, only enough to make him attractive."

The Creole girl clasped her hands with great

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

satisfaction, thinking she had won her point. "Then you agree that he is attractive?"

"I agree to that, yet he is not attractive to me for the reasons I have mentioned. What interests me in Monsieur Jallot is his hands. I study people's hands when I wish to know what they are like," said Antoinette, holding her own delicate ones up to the light and looking at them through half-closed eyes.

Otilie, with a little grimace, stretched wide her fingers as though for inspection.

"They are all impulse and tenderness," observed Antoinette, taking them affectionately. Her companion dimpled with pleasure and embraced her. "It seems to me," she continued, "that the gestures and shape of the hands are of great importance as an index of character."

"How is that?"

"Consider, my dear, that the hands greet us and dismiss us; that they show our irritation or pleasure in some tell-tale action; that in anger, they strike; that in affection, they caress! The truth is that they reveal more soul than any part of us, save only the eyes. . . . Now Monsieur Jallot's hands make him attractive. They are thin and long, delicate yet strong. They seem to belong to the old world. I have seen hands like his, but only in the pictures of dead masters. They insinuate something indescribable—oh, I cannot tell you what! They give to his most casual

A GENTLEMAN IN MOTLEY

phrase an eloquent, magic revelation of a mind concealing merits and depths of thought which his lips have not the inclination or the power to confide. I fancy his hands would be as terrible in the ecstasies of anger, as they are lively in amiable amusement; and how persuasive they could be when he had a cause to plead!"

"I love you when you are enthusiastic, like that, exclaimed Ottilie, embracing her again. "If I were a man I would borrow Monsieur Jallot's hands and beseech you to torment me for the rest of my life."

"If you were a man and a trifle taller—for my beau must be a good height—I should yield to you had you no hands at all, *chérie!*"

"*Coton mai!*" gaily ejaculated Ottilie, who delighted in that innocent oath; "suppose Monsieur Jallot, himself, should plead his own cause to you?"

Antoinette's eyes lighted with a flash of resentment at this suggestion, but she quickly realized that her companion meant no affront and spoke only in lightness of heart. Indignation passed from her and she replied, with studied coolness, "Monsieur Jallot is a barber!"

CHAPTER VI

SPRING—THE INSURGENT!

The orchestra of nature had played the dead march of the year and now essayed the greatest passage in its score—the thrilling symphony of spring. The visual harmonies of pearly evenings changed to the melodies of violet dusks, and these warming, vibrant tones set a-tingle the blood of Jallot, the barber. Never did ambition's brave anthem call to him so compellingly as in those April days. How his patience and philosophy were taxed then to endure the necessary humdrum of his atelier! It wore upon him until at last he decided that he must secure relief from its maddening drone.

To this end he gave over to Poupet those patrons and pupils who did not insist upon his personal service. Thus he managed to steal fresh hours in which to court his muse, his liberator.

Some encouragement was vouchsafed him, for "The Gateway of Dreams" had been revived at the Théâtre Saint Pierre, where its second playing brought critical endorsement if not popular acclaim. This moderate success insured the pro-

SPRING—THE INSURGENT!

duction of a tragedy upon which he now wished to bend his energies, and it was the lack of time to undertake this congenial task that made him fret and grow to hate the crafts he practiced in his shop.

Of all the hours, which the traffic of his atelier demanded in a week, only three brought him real recompense. These, the hours of Antoinette's instruction, had almost become necessary to him; certainly they were a source of inspiration and happiness. The acquaintance of master and pupil had flowered into a friendship, and with that, came a freedom in the exchange of thoughts, a venturing into the bourne of the intimate without fear of trespassing. They were standing, then, on the threshold of confidence.

Jallot came from these hours refreshed, even with a sense of exaltation, at times, which left him all the more restless, all the more impatient, all the more dissatisfied with his condition, yet hopeful of the future.

The spring brought, as well, a revival of unrest and discontent to a certain clique in New Orleans, composed less of Creoles than of men of foreign birth. There were murmurings of intrigues against the new government; and Jallot, often hearing them, was reminded of the words which had challenged his attention that December morning at the Place d'Armes.

This feeling found expression in the attitude

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

of the citizens toward the Americans: a bearing of contempt and even of hate. The atelier had witnessed many disputes, for the new government found partisans even among some of the oldest habitués.

A belligerent champion of the United States and its policy toward Louisiana, was Ludwig Froebel. One morning, while suffering his daily shave at the hands of Poupet—who kept him in constant fear by dancing about the chair and flourishing a razor to the tune of the Marseillaise—he fell into a controversy with Lemaitre and Villebois over this very question.

Disgusted with the old German's stubbornness, they turned from him to engage in a bout with the foils, as Lemaitre wished to demonstrate to Villebois the superiority of the thrust of his master, Planton, to that of Jallot.

"There!" exclaimed Lemaitre, with great satisfaction, touching Villebois; "that is the method of Planton!"

"Oh, f-fah!" returned his opponent, with a preparatory flourish of his foil, "that was an accident. You will not be able to touch me again; and you shall see that I am able to pass your guard."

Lemaitre parried the lunge easily and taunted Villebois by remarking, "I tell you, you really should study with Planton. He can teach you more in one morning than Jallot can in a month."

SPRING—THE INSURGENT!

"That's the very reason why I prefer Jallot. The little that I learn of him in a month is so much better than what you learn of Planton in a morning. It takes time to master the fine play of wrist which my tutor insists upon."

Lemaitre touched Villebois again, and mocked him. "Jallot's method cannot compare with Planton's. I prove it!"

This was more than Poupet could endure and still hold his tongue, for, to him, Jallot was the best swordsman, the greatest artist, the noblest gentleman in all the world; and to question his master's ability was sufficient to arouse the quadroon's anger.

"What is dad?" he cried, his patois thickening with his spleen. "Oh, Ah show yo', Michié Lemaitre!" He put down his razor, with an apology to Froebel, and, taking the foil from Villebois, assumed an attitude of attack. "*Voyons!*" he challenged Lemaitre. "Dad thrusd o' 'Sieur Jallot, Ah show yo' now—ad once! *En garde*, Michié!"

The Creole, with a smile of confidence, engaged Poupet, but much to his surprise he found a foil which flashed about his with bewildering swiftness and finished him off with a lunge in tierce, while his steel went whirling across the atelier.

"La, la!" laughed the little quadroon. "Dad was de thrusd o' Jallot, whad Michié Villebois say

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

waz preddy near as good as dad o' Planton—hein?"

Villebois, delighted at the discomfiture of Lemaitre, grinned his approval and patted Poupet on the shoulder. "Well done, boy," he said, and added, with a jeer at his companion, "What do you think of that thrust?"

"A fluke!" exclaimed Lemaitre, peevishly snatching the foil which Poupet recovered for him. "You can't disarm me again!"

"Hah, daz whad Ah goin' do," chuckled the youth, flourishing his foil; but before he could begin, Froebel half lathered, sat up protestingly in his chair.

"*Ach, Gott!*" he ejaculated. "What do you think, Poupet, that I shall forever sit while you to those jacknapes give fencing lessons?"

At this Villebois only leered, but Lemaitre, growing angry, threatened him with his fist, barking, "Pig of an American!"

The controversy was renewed where they had left off. "Pig!" gasped Froebel. "I am it not! American? *Ja, danke Gott!* The first an insult 'is, but that I let pass on account of the second, which is a compliment."

This brought forth the ridicule of Villebois, who bowed low, and puckering up his leathern-like lips, said, "A compliment! Ah! Fancy!"

Poupet, sighing, returned the foil to the tall Creole, and busied himself stropping his razor,

SPRING—THE INSURGENT!

while he whistled "Yankee Doodle Dandy." That tune, although it may have been calculated to soothe the temper of his customer, had no such effect. The old German was aroused. He meant that those flippant Creoles should feel the sharp edge of his sarcasm.

"*Ja*, it a compliment is," he went on; "but you, Herr Villebois—and you, Herr Lemaitre—are too dumb to understand; and though you be Americans—that name is for you too good."

"A Lemaitre, an American!" vociferated the Creole in deep disgust, pounding his chest by way of emphasis.

Froebel, with a sweep of his arm, brushed Poupet aside as if he were a fly. "That is one great shame for the United States, but it is so," he insisted.

"Yes," put in the quadroon, "evvabody godd t' be Americane now!"

Villebois walked up close to the barber chair, and, snapping his fingers in the German's face, drawled, "Your damned United States have bought Louisiana, but they cannot turn a Creole gentleman into a Yankee barbarian."

"No," supplemented Lemaitre, quickly; "we Creoles will never obey your barbarous laws!"

"*Ach Himmel!* You do not know what is good for you!" As the German made this dogmatic assertion, Poupet caught him by the chin and applied the lather with vigor.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"Good?" echoed Lemaitre, with heat; "it's tyrannous! We can no longer import slaves! Presently we shall be obliged to work!"

"A calamity worse than the anti-smuggling laws," groaned Villebois. "*Morbleu!* Your new government, Herr Froebel, insists that we pay duty on a piece of silk, a bottle of Madeira."

Poupet rendered a reply as difficult as possible by holding the nose of the German between his fingers, and flourishing the razor over his victim's jowls. Nevertheless, Froebel succeeded in retorting in nasal accents, "All that is most excellent! Governor Claiborne knows better than you what he himself is about."

"If he succeeds in compelling you to speak English in the place of your bad French, I shall forgive him a great deal." Villebois was indirectly referring to the introduction of the English tongue in the courts, a measure bitterly opposed by the Creoles.

"That would be even to my taste as much as the act which makes of Louisiana two parts!" Froebel for a fact cared little enough about this expedient of Congress. His only desire was to provoke the Creoles. "Also it is good that the Americans are put into the public office and not you, who are so lazy as crocodiles."

This was a policy exceedingly distasteful to the citizens, and to Lemaitre in particular, who had conceived a hatred for Osbourne, whose ap-

SPRING—THE INSURGENT!

pointment as Sheriff of the province had been announced but a few days before. Already the American had made himself and his authority felt by ordering out bayonets to put down a riot in a gambling house on the Rue Royale, and suppressing in person a duel in which the Creole took part as a second.

"Tell me this," demanded Lemaitre, "what are we coming to when an American, in outrageous clothes and a gun in hand, breaks in upon an affair of honor?"

Poupet dared to venture the remark that such a thing was very bad conduct. He was immediately hushed by Froebel, who thrusting the quadroom from him, and bobbing up in the chair, exclaimed, "*Mein Gott!* You object because the government will not let you each other kill! For my part I wish they would make a law compelling you, yourselves, into sausages to cut."

"Uh!" grimaced Villebois. "A sausage! I should much prefer being turned into a pattie. And, by the way, Moreau of the Tivoli makes them up wonderfully."

Lemaitre returned to the attack with vehemence. "We don't propose to be treated as naughty children, Monsieur. It's intolerable!"

Again Froebel struggled out of Poupet's grasp to asseverate, "All that you speak as being ill is good, very good. You are too dumb to see. You should be glad to have been purchased by so sen-

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

sible a government as the United States is. They will to your lawlessness a stop put, and, in spite of you, a godly and prosperous land of Louisiana make."

"Do not think that we shall submit to this new government tamely," stormed Lemaitre.

The German was quick with his retort: "You will have to submit; if not tamely, then tamed you shall be."

Villebois, by this time weary of the quibbling, and thinking of the luncheon awaiting them at the Tivoli, urged Lemaitre to drop the subject and come away. The young Creole agreed, but, as he wriggled into his coat, he administered this parting shot: "It is such as you, you German *caniche*, who make this new government so arrogant."

Froebel had no intention of giving them the last word. As they were leaving the atelier he shouted, "*Ja*, and all the good Creoles are just like me! *Danke Gott* there are not many like as you are. It is not the great mass of intelligent Creoles—oh, no!—but the bad Frenchmen and the yellow Spaniards and other foreign scums, who object to the United States government."

Lemaitre was about to turn back, but Villebois caught his arm and drew him through the door, saying, "Come, let the old bear sizzle."

Perfectly satisfied that he had got the best of them, Froebel lay back in his chair, and said to Poupet, "Now you put a quick finish to my face."

CHAPTER VII

DEBTS HAVE LONG MEMORIES

His toilette completed, Ludwig Froebel, with an energetic step, which still betrayed his old age, stumped down the Rue du Maine, turned along the quay, and finally came to a stop near the Rue Conti. He paused there for a time, looking mournfully over the shipping moored at the broad levee, which was reared high above the street in order to defend the city from the encroachment of the rushing Mississippi.

In all that little fleet of merchantmen not one familiar masthead met his eye. American, French, Spanish and English flags fluttered in the lazy breeze, but none was his; and the "Faderland," which bore the remnant of his ill-kept fortune, was then a month or more overdue. If she did not make port it meant that he must score down the third ship lost within a year.

The quay—lively with its traffic: the trundling of bales and hogsheads, the creak of tackle, the shouts of stevedores and crews, the bustling of merchants and their clerks—gave no heed to the drooping figure of Froebel, who stood leaning on

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

his cane, looking away down the river but seeing nothing through the mist in his eyes.

"Thank heaven," he soliloquized, "that I did not venture a fourth; that there is yet enough in bank to keep us well provided against my years, and leave a tidy portion for Antoinette."

With that, he walked on until he came to a crazy row of wooden warehouses. Over their doorways hung scarcely legible signs announcing the names of their owners, and one of these bore the legend, "L. Froebel—Shipmerchant." He pushed open the dingy door, and making his way through the darkened and empty wareroom to the rear, entered a partitioned space which he called his office. Its sole occupant was a clerk, an old German, sound asleep over a ledger.

"Heinrich!" exclaimed Froebel, rousing the man with a gentle shake. "Wake up! I want you to go down to the custom-house and learn whether they have word of the 'Faderland.'"

The clerk got to his feet and put on a much battered beaver with a weary air of protest. "*Mein Herr*," said he, shuffling to the door, "I have asked that same thing every morning now for five weeks. It is no use. The ship is lost." He went out shaking his head.

For a long time Froebel sat pondering. Suddenly he was startled by a sharp rap, and, looking up, saw a stranger standing on the threshold. The man lifted his chapeau and bowed smilingly.

DEBTS HAVE LONG MEMORIES

"Señor Froebel, do you not recognize me?" he asked, speaking French with the merest suggestion of a foreign accent.

The merchant stared at his visitor with a puzzled expression. There was something familiar to him in those Castilian features, and the indolent poise of that well-knit figure; yet his mind lagged in remembrance.

"I am Luiz Delicado," announced the stranger quietly, looking at Froebel with a pair of amiable blue eyes. The corners of his mouth turned up in an expression of amusement as he noted the consternation his words produced.

The old man, who had been leaning forward, turned pale as a magnolia, and slowly sank back in his chair, his lips quivering and his hands opening and closing spasmodically. At last he groaned, "I—I thought you—dead!"

"Naturally," returned the Spaniard, "but you see I am enjoying excellent health." His appearance did not belie his statement. The native olive coloring of his skin was ruddied over as though by long exposure to the elements. Yet he had the look of a man who would be as much at ease in court as in camp. The days of his youth were past, as the gray patches at his temple testified, but he was evidently enjoying the prime of manhood to its full span.

"I—thought you—dead!" Froebel repeated, as though it were beyond belief that his visitor should

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

be among the living.

The Spaniard laid his sword cane and chapeau upon the table, and took a seat opposite the merchant, saying, "And I feared you might be." Again the amiable smile and the gleam of white teeth. "I congratulate you upon your good health." He waited then, as though to give his vis-à-vis the opportunity to speak, but the old man simply kept on murmuring, "I thought you dead!"

"I believe that there is a little matter of business between us, Señor," resumed Delicado; "you will remember that twelve years ago I left my estate in trust with you. I presume it has prospered under your management?"

"Y-y-e-s!" faltered Froebel.

"I am come to relieve you of it!"

The merchant coughed nervously. "I shall most happy be to give you an accounting."

"At your earliest convenience, if you please, Señor," said the Spaniard, picking up his hat and cane.

"It will take some time," ventured the German.

"I remarked 'at your convenience,'" rejoined the other. "Whenever you are ready, send word to my lodgings, No. 11 Rue Bienville." He shook the trembling hand of his trustee, and went out.

When Heinrich returned he discovered the old German still seated where Delicado had left him, his head in his hands. He did not look up until

DEBTS HAVE LONG MEMORIES

the clerk spoke.

"Just as I thought, *mein Herr*," said Heinrich; "there is no news of the 'Faderland.' "

Froebel heaved a sigh and shook his head. "I am bankrupt," he timorously announced.

"It is not so bad as that, *mein Herr*. If you wish, you can liquidate your affairs and retire with a fair income from your real estate."

"That is what I thought this morning; but I never expected then that Luiz Delicado would walk into my office and demand a settlement."

The clerk was almost as astonished at this statement as his employer had been at the appearance of the Spaniard. He would not credit it at first, as he had shared with Froebel the belief that Delicado was dead; but when he was convinced that there was no mistake, he wrung his hands in dismay.

The fact of the matter was that in the year 1792 Delicado, who was a restless, adventurous spirit, fell heir to a valuable plantation; but soon tiring of a planter's life, he went voyaging, after selecting Froebel as one to be trusted with his property. Where he had been, or what he had done in that long interim between his going and his return, no one knew, save that he had come to New Orleans from the Spanish colony in Florida.

For almost a decade succeeding his departure, Froebel had religiously managed the Spaniard's estate and banked its revenue, pending his client's

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

return, although in all that time he had no word of the wanderer. But when ten years had passed, and still no claim was presented against the trust, the German, greatly in need of funds to repair a long series of ill fortunes, appropriated to his use the funds accumulated in the name of Delicado, and under further stress, had gone so far as to dispose of the Spaniard's slaves and mortgage his plantation.

Froebel carried out these transactions with no thought of fraud, for he was at heart a thoroughly honest man. He had no doubt that the Spaniard was dead, and long administration of the estate had taught him to look upon it as his own. The risks he took were common to the trade, and while they were great, the profits, too, were large. So, had anything short of continuous ill luck been his measure, he must have reaped sufficient gain to triple Delicado's fortune and his own.

The sea had exacted heavy toll of him; and now, to cap his misery, this Spaniard must return from out the tomb of time, to claim his last picayune. That was what it meant to settle Delicado's long-standing account. Froebel's savings, warehouse, stores and villas must go. He was ruined; and when that was known, as known it must be, who, he thought, would make his credit good?

He had asked for time and been given it, but, at best, he might delay the reckoning no more than a week or two. Still, in the interval, he

DEBTS HAVE LONG MEMORIES

thought that he might find the means to mend his broken fortune; or at least provide enough to save Antoinette the pain of poverty.

He considered for a moment the advisability of rendering Delicado a falsified account in order that he might set aside a sum which would insure the girl's future comfort; but he could not bring himself to that, and though she must suffer, too, he knew that he could do no less than pay his obligations in full.

After coming to this decision, his drooping spirits revived somewhat, and he resolved that, until he had exhausted every means to recoup his losses, he would keep his own counsel, even from Antoinette; and so he instructed his clerk, who set about the computation of his master's debt to Delicado.

CHAPTER VIII

"AN EXCELLENT SHOP IN WHICH TO GET YOUR THROAT CUT"

Delicado left the office of Froebel, and strolled along the levee, humming a chanson. He looked about with interest, and, since he had not set foot in Louisiana for ten years, the whole city seemed new to him. The great fire of 1794 had burned out the heart of New Orleans, and the people, profiting by the lesson which that catastrophe had taught, built no more with shingle and thatch, but put up houses of adobe, stucco and brick, and roofed them over with slate and tile.

Having some time on his hands, Delicado turned from the embankment at the Rue St. Pierre to watch for a while the promenaders about the Place d'Armes. Presently, with a satirical smile at the American flag, he wandered across the town to the Rue St. Louis, which seemed to him much like a Parisian boulevard, save for the muddy banquette and the slippery stepping stones. Moving on to the Rue Conti, he found a veritable congress of nations. Almost every house possessed a distinct characteristic. On one side was the shop of a Swiss clockmaker, his window showing

"AN EXCELLENT SHOP"

a bit of his handiwork—a disk upon which little wooden men and women performed an endless quadrille. On the other side, a French tailor, in skull cap, sat cross-legged as he plied his needle. Here was a Spanish cobbler; there a Jew peddler; next a Dutch knife grinder; then a German baker; a sailors' lodging house, and a Creole restaurant, famous for its gumbo—all huddled together in a thoroughly friendly fashion.

By this time it was noon, and Delicado, remembering that he meant to have his hair dressed, retraced his steps through the Rue Chartres to the Rue du Maine, and began glancing from right to left as though searching for some particular place. Presently his eye lighted upon a brass basin, which overhung the entrance to the Atelier Jallot.

"That must be the shop to which Gazonac referred," he reflected, and, without hesitation, passed through the arch and knocked at the barber's door.

Poupet, who was giving Villebois a fencing lesson, answered the call.

"Is this the Atelier Jallot?" asked the Spaniard, stepping across the doorsill, and reviewing in one swift look, the quadroom, Villebois, and the appointments of the studio.

"Yez, Michié," answered Poupet, politely.

"Are you Señor Jallot?"

Poupet grinned and bowed. "Yo' pay me gweat compliment, Michié! No! Ah am juz

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

Poupet, "Sieur Jallot's assistant."

"I have not been in New Orleans for many years," explained Delicado. "My excuse for not knowing Señor Jallot."

The little quadroom went on with enthusiasm to inform the stranger that Jallot was the greatest barber, the best dancing master, the most accomplished swordsman, the most celebrated littérateur in Louisiana; while Villebois, wearying of the conversation, hung up his foil, and, divesting himself of mask and shield, proceeded to rearrange his toilette before the mirror.

"Your master appears to be quite a wonderful person," commented the Spaniard, smiling.

"Mos' won'erful!" declared Poupet.

"Can he be seen at this hour?"

"Nod ad presend, Michié; he ve'y buzy wridin' a play."

"Well, then, when will he be at leisure?"

"By four o'clock dese evenin', Michié."

"I will return at that hour to have my hair dressed."

"*Merci*, Ah mague de appoindmend, iv yo' pliz give yo' name."

"Luiz Delicado."

Villebois, hearing this, turned from the glass with sudden interest, and addressed the Spaniard: "Monsieur, this is an excellent shop in which to get your throat cut!"

Poupet gasped an indignant protest, but was

“AN EXCELLENT SHOP”

quickly silenced by Delicado, who elevated his eyebrows and significantly scrutinized Villebois. “That is a jest! Is it not, Señor?” he observed with a bland smile, appealing to the Creole.

“To be sure,” confirmed Villebois, slipping into his coat and setting his beaver firmly on his head.

“If you are going out,” Delicado continued, “perhaps you will be so kind as to direct me to the house of a Monsieur Gazonac.”

“I shall be happy to do so,” responded the Creole, leading the way.

When they had gone, Poupet reported the appointment to Jallot, and recounted to him the strange dialogue which had passed between his pupil and the visitor.

“It iz a fool—dad sayin’—*hein*?” he questioned.

“Perhaps; but do not fail to call me when Monsieur Delicado returns,” answered Jallot, dismissing him.

“Delicado! Delicado!” he wondered. “That name seems familiar, yet strange to me. Where have I heard it? And that grim phrase, ‘this is an excellent shop in which to get your throat cut!’ What is its implication?”

Trifles may form rungs in the ladder of destiny, and Jallot, recognizing that, did not despise them. As he plied his pen, the problem of the man and the phrase recurred to him with persistence; and while he puzzled over it, in the seclusion of his cabinet, another riddle, linked with that

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

which now occupied his attention, came into the shop in the person of Tonton, Mademoiselle Trudeau's maid.

Poupet received her with unaffected delight. "Dese de gweatez pleasure yo' come! Ah ged much skeer when de las' time Mamzelle Trudeau arrive widout yo'."

The Yellow Kitten demurely laid a hand over her heart and rejoined, "Ah waz in my lill' white chapel!"

"*Mon Dieu*, yo' sick!" he exclaimed, in sympathy. "Ah die dead iv yo' no come no more soon." And, seeing an appreciative look in the eyes of the girl, he added, "Say, yo' tell me now—when we ged marrie?"

"Ah am here on buziness," she announced, holding him off. "Mamzelle Trudeau wish t' know whad time to-day can M'chié Jallot give her de fencin' lezzon 'stead of to-morrow. She have someding also impordand t' say ad him."

"Ah will ask dad; bud firz yo' tell me 'bout dad ged marrie," insisted Poupet.

Tonton looked coolly about the atelier, and, embracing it with a gesture, asked, "Dese shop iz not yo' shop yed?"

Her lover sighed and made a gesture of negation.

"*Ma foi!* Ah not marrie anybody whad aind got a shop to hisself!" she announced.

"Iv Ah get dese shop, Tonton, or somebody

“AN EXCELLENT SHOP ”

else shop—yo’ marrie me?”

“Yo’ get de shop firz, Poupet!”

Somewhat crushed, he excused himself to consult Jallot about the fencing lesson. In his absence, Lemaitre, seeking Gazonac, looked in at the atelier door. The sight of his fiancée’s maid at once challenged his suspicious fancy.

“What are you doing here?” he inquired.

Tonton, startled at his brusque question, stammered something indefinite about an errand for her mistress.

“She sent you—for what? This is not the day of her lesson!”

Recovering from her surprise, Tonton ignored his threatening look and calmly replied, “Pardon, Michié, de affair of Mamzelle—”

“Is also my affair. What is it?”

“Michié need not make so loud talk. De buzi-ness iz to change de hour of Mamzelle’s lesson.”

Lemaitre laughed his unbelief, and turned to the court door as Poupet came from the cabinet.

“Michié Jallot will see Mamzelle Trudeau at two dese evenin’,” reported the quadroon. Lemaitre, hearing this, gave a grunt of irritation, and after a moment’s consideration, said to Poupet, “If you should see Monsieur Gazonac tell him that I shall be at the Tivoli not later than three o’clock.”

Tonton made a face after the Creole, and declared that he was a most unpleasant person. “Ah wish dad Mamzelle Trudeau give him de congé.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

Dere is Michié Osbourne, de Americane officer—much bes' man," she remarked, scratching her nose daintily.

"Oh, you' nose itch!" cried Poupet. "Dad a sign a old bachelor iz goin' to kizz yo' an' a young man is crazzie 'bout dad."

"De young man bes' not try," laughed the Yellow Kitten, darting out the door.

CHAPTER IX

A PETTICOAT AND A CONSPIRACY

Ottilie, breathless, and in a fever of excitement, reached the atelier that afternoon promptly at the hour of her appointment. That something unusual had occurred to disturb her, and that it had to do with Lemaitre, was evident to Tonton, who, while they waited, busied herself accoutering her mistress for the lesson. Neither did Ottilie's agitation escape the attention of Jallot, as he greeted her.

"You are very kind to give me this hour, Monsieur," she exclaimed, jerking nervously at a stubborn buckle.

"It is a pleasure to arrange these little matters to suit you, Mademoiselle," he returned, as he adjusted her shield.

She looked at him with embarrassment, while he chose a foil for her, and at length faltered, "I—I confess, Monsieur, that it was not altogether on account of the fencing that I asked you to change my hour."

"So?" He affected surprise. "What then, Mademoiselle?"

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"I—I cannot quite make up my mind to tell you!"

She hoped he would coax her into relieving her mind, but all he said was, "Very well! Are you ready?"

She began her lesson in an ill humor, and when he had evaded her guard three times in succession, she stamped her foot with impatience.

"You should have guarded in prime," he advised.

Again and again she failed to ward his thrusts, until, in a temper, she flung down her foil. "I tell you, Monsieur, I cannot fence to-day. I am too nervous." Off came her mask and shield, and the gauntlets followed them.

Jallot shook his head. "You did not come for a lesson?"

Otilie was at once penitent. "Oh, forgive me," she entreated. "I take your time for nothing."

"Do not say that, Mademoiselle; you may command me on all occasions and for all things."

He smiled and waved her to the window-seat, where she sat for a little while, her chin in her hands, staring at the tips of her slippers. "You really mean that?" she presently asked.

"Of course! If there is anything I would not do for your sake, I certainly would for your father's!"

"And you will wonder that I do not go to him

A PETTICOAT AND A CONSPIRACY

now, instead of coming to you; but I dare not." She paused a moment, and then receiving a look of encouragement from Jallot, went on. "As you know, Monsieur Lemaitre is my fiancé! I heard something from him last night which has greatly disturbed me. I do not know, but I fear he has imprudently joined in an affair that may mean his—his death!"

"A duel?"

"No, Monsieur; much worse than that! He has become entangled in a conspiracy against the American government."

Jallot's eyes widened with wonder. "A conspiracy!" he exclaimed. "With whom?"

"Monsieur Gazonac is one and Monsieur Villebois another. There is a third he mentioned whose name I cannot remember. It was Spanish."

"Was it Delicado?"

Ottilie clasped her hands excitedly. "Yes, yes—Delicado," she ejaculated.

In an instant the problem, which had puzzled Jallot, now assumed a larger shape. He recalled the scraps of conversation he had picked up in the Place d'Armes, and remembered that there he had first heard the Spaniard's name. What he had assumed to be no more than idle gossip, now appeared to him of graver import. How serious the intrigue was, and how much it would mean to him, he did not even fancy. Destiny, playing out the great game of life, shuffled the pack and

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

stacked the cards against him. Her lead was blind to him, and only time could show the make-up of his hand, though he held in it the fortunes of a state, the happiness of a woman, and the making of himself.

In some clairvoyant fashion he was given to feel that fate had challenged him. The strain of a fighting sire vitalized the blood of a debonair son, so that almost unconsciously he accepted the gage of fate, as his father might have answered a call to arms; only with this difference: his impulse was tempered with his mother's wit, which taught him that the stoic's mask is often a better weapon of defence than the point of a sword.

Ottillie was studying his immobile features for some sign of his thoughts, but reading nothing there, ventured to ask, "What do you mean to do, Monsieur?"

"What do you wish me to do?"

"Save Monsieur Lemaitre! If the conspiracy should fail, he would be arrested and perhaps executed. I want you to save him from this danger."

Jallot smiled at her benevolently. "Have you any idea of the great difficulties your commission imposes upon me, Mademoiselle?" he inquired.

"Ah, yes; and that is one reason why I came to you—I have such faith in your ability to do anything and do it well. I should have told my father, but I feared that he might blunder where you would succeed. Oh yes, I see the difficulties;

A PETTICOAT AND A CONSPIRACY

and I must tell you that Monsieur Lemaitre would never forgive me if he learned that I had confided this secret to you."

"Of course, I understand that," he rejoined. "Well, what must be done, can be done!"

"You will undertake to save him?"

"For your sake, yes, Mademoiselle!"

Under the impulse of her great gratitude and relief, Otilie embraced Jallot, and wept a little into the frills of his immaculate shirt front. This was the tableau which met the jealous eyes of Lemaitre himself, who, primed with suspicion, entered the atelier without the ceremony of knocking.

At the sight of him, Tonton arose from her seat in apprehension, and Jallot, looking over the shoulder of his pupil, saw the intruder close and lock the door behind him with significant violence. The noise, accompanying this action, caused Otilie to turn from the barber in haste, and seeing her fiancé advancing in a rage, retreated to the window.

"What have you to say for yourself?" vociferated Lemaitre, coming to a pause within a few paces of Jallot.

"What would you like me to say?" rejoined the master without betraying his annoyance.

This retort only served to infuriate the Creole.

"You make a jest of it! We shall see, Monsieur le Barbier!"

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"Etienne!" exclaimed Ottilie, protesting against the epithet.

"Be still," he commanded, and then addressed himself to Jallot, accusingly. "You take advantage of Mademoiselle's coming to you for instruction—"

Ottilie interrupted him with a show of anger. "You are mistaken, Monsieur; and you insult me to—"

"I shall hear from you later," snapped her fiancé. "I have first to deal with this gentleman!"

"Proceed," suggested Jallot, who began to be bored with Lemaitre's ill humor.

"Explain, then, how it is that I find Mademoiselle Trudeau in your arms! You surely have had time to invent an excuse, but I warn you it must be convincing." As he made this declaration, the Creole flung down his chapeau and gripped his sword cane.

Jallot watched these brawling preparations with contempt, and replied, "It is a matter of indifference to me whether my word is convincing or not. But for the sake of Mademoiselle, I would make no explanation. The fact is that I offered her some little service. In gratitude she impetuously embraced me."

"What is that service?" demanded Lemaitre.

"That is my affair."

"No! It is mine! You shall tell me, or—" The Creole finished by tapping his cane.

A PETTICOAT AND A CONSPIRACY

Jallot smiled at him and said, "I will not fight with you, Monsieur!"

"The coward lives a long time," jeered Lemaitre.

For a moment Otilie held her breath in timorous expectation, fearful of what might follow her fiancé's studied insult; but Jallot only shrugged his shoulders. "If Mademoiselle had not given me great proof of her affection for you, Monsieur, I would not bid you go in peace."

This unexpected reproof subdued Lemaitre for the moment. With a shrug of his shoulders he went to the door and stood there waiting, while Tonton bowed the bonnet ribbons under her mistress's chin.

As Otilie offered Jallot her hand in thanks, Lemaitre gave an exclamation of impatience, and the barber, feigning to misinterpret its meaning, said: "When you speak again, Monsieur, it should be to ask Mademoiselle's pardon—not mine! Good day!" He bowed them out.

With their departure, Jallot turned his thoughts to consideration of the conspiracy, but his reverie was presently interrupted by Poupet, who came in carrying his master's hat and cane.

"Pardon, Michié," said he, "yo' have an appondmend wid de sheriff ad de Pig an' Whistle ad t'ree o'clock."

"So I have!" He looked at his watch. "I shall return in time to keep my engagement with Delicado."

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

The Pig and Whistle whither Jallot now hurried his steps, was a quaint little cabaret in the Rue St. Philippe. Its one story was capped with an attic, its hip roof of red tiles was broken with dormer windows, and the broad casement and arched doorway—cut in the adobe wall—were comfortably shaded by projecting eaves. On a warm day it looked invitingly cool within, for the eye, passing over its well-worn but immaculate appointments, rested upon the green verdure of a miniature garden, which showed through a wide window at the rear of the café. A part of its charm was the absence of culinary odors—the kitchen was located in the garden and concealed under a bower of jasmine. Through the open window came the perfume of magnolias, mingling with the scent of a vast variety of flowers, which grew in boxes upon the casement ledge or reposed in earthen jars upon the tables. Canaries sang in wicker cages, swung from the cypress beams above, and contributed a pretty air of cheerfulness to the place.

The cabaret was kept by a villainous looking Mexican, who served delicious dishes and insidious beverages compounded after his own original recipes, and the fame of them brought him a large custom among the Creoles, whose chief occupation was that of wasting time. Their fashion was to place themselves in front of a glass of *eau sucrée*, and wait for the hours to pass, as though

A PETTICOAT AND A CONSPIRACY

the mere exertion of living was a torment. Somnolence thus became an art with them; and nowhere did they practice it with such indolent persistence as at the cafés.

Particularly attractive to a certain coterie of Creoles was The Pig and Whistle, for the reason that its hospitable eaves afforded a shade in the open air, where, tilting their chairs back against the wall, they could smoke, drink and gossip the hours away.

It was a favorite resort of Jallot's for the sake of its cooking; and Osbourne, whom he had introduced to the delights of its kitchen, also became an enthusiastic patron. The American was there when Jallot arrived, and both were much relieved because the habitués of the place were occupying their chairs outside, thus leaving the interior untenanted save for an old Creole, who was fast asleep in a corner.

"This is the best of luck," commented the barber, as he took a seat across the table from Osbourne; "we have the place quite to ourselves."

"So long as the weather is fair, the idlers are sure to stay outside," said the sheriff. "In fact, for the last year they do not seem to have moved. I often wonder if they stir at all, and if our host does not carry them in the last thing at night and set them out again the first thing in the morning as he does his plants."

"That is more than likely," smiled Jallot. "I

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

am sure the only time they move is at the summoning of the Black Doctor—Death; a call which even you and I, busy as we are, must harken to as well as they.”

“Well, I intend to hold him off as long as I can, and for that purpose I have ordered dinner.”

“Which may have quite the contrary effect!”

“I know I am not so accomplished as you in the assembling of a *ménu*, Jallot, but I warrant you’ll be satisfied in this case.”

“For my part, I shall probably not think of what we have to eat—my mind is concerned with a matter of much more importance. Indeed, if I had not been reminded of our rendezvous, I should probably have forgotten to dine at all.”

“I hope I have not taken you from some affair which has a better claim upon your time than I.”

Jallot shook his head. “It so happens that you are the very man I most wish to see under the circumstances.”

“In which case I presume I am permitted to be curious?”

“You are; and I shall confide in you as soon as we are served. Here comes Pepo with your outrage upon gastronomy.”

Osbourne had taken a leaf from Jallot’s book when he had set out to provide the dinner, and he confessed as much when the Frenchman complimented him upon his good taste.

“It is a great shame,” said Jallot, “to rumple

A PETTICOAT AND A CONSPIRACY

your fine humor with an alarm; but, my good sheriff, you are about to have your official hands employed in an intrigue which is likely to provoke your wrath."

Osbourne bit his thumb, which was his way of displaying amiable defiance. "Is it a duel?"

"No," whispered the barber; "it is a conspiracy against the government!"

"Pooh!" ridiculed the American; "the people have had all the rioting they want. I've seen to that."

Jallot pushed aside his plate of gumbo. "We have a proverb here which precisely fits your case: 'It's only the shoes that know if the stockings have holes.' You have lived in New Orleans a great many years, you speak French as well as most of us, and better than some, but you do not know us. You are filled with a certain commendable self-satisfaction or conceit, which blunts your powers of observation and leads you to believe that Louisiana has accepted the inevitable; and you think no more about the problems of properly ordering the affairs of the province. Let me tell you that you are all in the wrong. Louisiana may have accepted your government, but surely she has not embraced it!"

"Oh, that will come," asserted Osbourne airily.

"Possibly, but you have to deal with the present, and if you do not rub up your goggles you will wake some fine morning to find yourself eat-

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

ing breakfast from a tin plate in the gaol, with the governor as a companion, while some Spaniard dines from the silver service at the Hotel de Ville to celebrate the overthrow of the American authorities."

The sheriff waved his hand toward the window, where they could see the heads of the idlers in front of the cabaret. "They hatch a conspiracy every day!" He laughed heartily at the idea.

Jallot did not wait for him to finish, but leaned across the table and touched him on the arm, saying, "Before you die of laughter, hear me out. This conspiracy is not the design of Creoles, but is headed by a Frenchman who is known to you, and a Spaniard who is not. Do you realize the influence of Gazonac?"

In an instant Osbourne became serious. He knew Gazonac as a close friend to the powerful Marquis Casa Calvo, the former commissioner of Spain, who still remained in New Orleans, and about whom clustered those most bitterly opposed to the dominion of the new government. Rumor had long associated the Spaniard's name with various enterprises, the aim of which was supposedly to wrest Louisiana from the United States; and, though nothing, up to that time, had actually developed to prove him concerned in projects of rebellion, still he was regarded in official quarters as a likely menace to the peace of the province.

A PETTICOAT AND A CONSPIRACY

Gazonac had the reputation of being, by grace, the jackal of this lion, for a lion, indeed, was Casa Calvo. He ruled the social state, if not the political one, and counted among his followers an army of adventurous swords, ready to be drawn in his support at the raising of a jewelled finger. More than this, he had affiliations with free-booting Spaniards in Florida, whence he could draw formidable recruits in the event of urgent need.

Osbourne therefore saw at once that where Gazonac was interested, his puissant compatriot might also be concerned. Certainly it was a matter demanding serious attention, particularly as the people of Louisiana, still regarding the new regime with anything but cordial feelings, might readily be incited to take arms against the government. All would depend upon the man who dared to take leadership in the enterprise. If it were only Gazonac, the brawler, there was little to fear for the result. The Frenchman was too quick tempered, too illy-poised, to guide the destiny of such a venture.

"You say that Gazonac is the leader of this conspiracy, Jallot?" asked the sheriff.

"I said he was one of two, who have come under my notice; but I fancy you will have to look higher to find the head of this affair."

"Who is the other?"

"A Spaniard—called Delicado, who came to my atelier this morning for the avowed purpose of

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

having his hair dressed; but I suspect him of a deeper motive. He is to return at four o'clock, when I shall take pains to wait upon him."

"Are you sure that you are not letting your imagination run away with your reason?" queried Osbourne.

"Positively! The conspiracy is being organized already. Villebois and Lemaitre are enrolled."

"That is news!" exclaimed the American, ominously.

Jallot could not suppress a smile. "I ask you, is it fair that you should permit your prejudice against Lemaitre to affect your treatment of the issue?" he inquired. He was satisfied that Osbourne entertained a genuine affection for Ottilie Trudeau, and heard with some apprehension the threat in his companion's ejaculation. "No matter what comes," he added, "I am bound to see that no harm befalls Lemaitre through this affair."

"Why?" The question was angrily put.

"That was the price of my information." Jallot evaded the sheriff's searching look.

There was a ring of jealousy in Osbourne's voice as he asked, "Did you get your information of Mademoiselle Trudeau?"

The barber gave a little laugh, which did not mislead his interlocutor, who refused to listen to the admonishment that he must be cautious. "I swear to you, Jallot," he went on, "that I shall arrest them all."

A PETTICOAT AND A CONSPIRACY

"What a wonderful sheriff you are!" mocked the other.

Osbourne writhed under this derision. "What would you do?" he demanded.

"I would ask my friend, Victor Jallot, to become one of the conspirators that he might learn the details of the plot, the name of every man concerned; and then—possessed of that knowledge—but not until then—I would crush the enterprise with one swift, sure blow!"

For a moment Osbourne said nothing, but stared at the speaker as though estimating his ability to carry out such a design. At last, apparently satisfied, he asked, "You will undertake this for me?"

"Yes," replied Jallot, simply; "I am rather keen for the adventure!"

CHAPTER X

JALLOT IS CALLED "PAPOUTE"

Jallot's readiness to undertake the commission was not wholly for the sake of adventure. The affair, although he could not have foreseen where it would lead him, suggested greater possibilities. He was like those brave spirits who, taking advantage of all that fate flings in their path, see the incidents through, and philosophically accept the ill or good measure vouchsafed their intrepidity.

In the case of Jallot this did not mean that he was in the least infirm of purpose. On the contrary he kept well in mind the peculiar end toward which he strove, forging chance occasions to fit the structure of his life's design. So he meant that his success in this adventure, one way or another, must advance his fortune.

He therefore lost no time, but hastened back to the atelier, and had scarcely removed his coat and donned his barber's tunic, when Delicado entered the door, left open to the evening breeze.

"Is this Señor Jallot?" he asked with a flourish.

"Yes, Monsieur," returned the other, surveying the Spaniard closely.

"I am Luiz Delicado. I have been recom-

JALLOT IS CALLED "PAPOUTE"

mended to your shop by Señor Gazonac. I come to have my hair dressed."

Jallot invited him to the chair, and rang for Poupet, who relieved the visitor of chapeau and stick, and fastened an apron about his neck.

"You are a stranger to New Orleans, Monsieur?" inquired the barber as he set out scissors, comb and brush.

"Not entirely. I lived here twelve years ago."

Jallot began dressing his customer's hair. "There have been many changes in that time."

"Louisiana was under Spanish rule then," remarked Delicado, his eyes riveted on the mirror as he watched with fascination the dexterous manipulations of the tonsor.

"It would be better were it under the old regime, Monsieur."

Delicado looked up with interest. "Then you do not approve of the new government?"

"It is barbarous."

"That should not offend you," jested the Spaniard.

"You have a keen wit, Monsieur," laughed Jallot, and, making sure that he was not observed, winked at Poupet, who was waxing the floor. "I am a barber," he added, "but I have a taste above soap, I assure you!"

"You are a surgeon, too, I understand."

"Yes, at a pinch I have presumed to use the lance."

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"Then you are not averse to letting a little blood?" quizzed Delicado.

"This is an excellent shop in which to get your throat cut," Jallot's tone was impersonal.

The Spaniard started up in the chair in genuine amazement. "What's that?" he exclaimed.

"A jest," replied the barber; and dismissed Poupet with a gesture.

Into the blue eyes of Delicado came a look of wariness as he asked, "Do you always turn your assistant out when you become merry?"

"No! Only when my customer shows signs of scintillating. Poupet is just cunning enough to borrow the flower of your wit and serve it to my patrons as his own, thus depriving me of the pleasure of plagiarizing you myself."

"Then I may take it that this jest is not original with you, Señor?"

Jallot hesitated. He knew that much depended upon the reply. However impatient he was to come to the point, he realized that he must not show too great an interest. "No one knows that as well as you," he finally countered.

"What makes you think so?"

"Many things, Monsieur!"

"Name one."

"We are agreed that government of Louisiana by the United States is not an ideal condition."

"I have not said so!"

"I was under the impression that you had!"

JALLOT IS CALLED "PAPOUTE"

Again there was a pause. Jallot was putting the finishing touches to Delicado's toilette. "There!" he exclaimed, throwing off the apron, and offering his customer a hand-glass.

"Excellent!" appraised the Spaniard, as he took a hasty survey. Then he rose from the chair and added, "A man of your discretion is wasting his time in a shop like this."

"I have thought that myself," smiled Jallot.

Delicado became absorbed in a kind of reverie, from which he was aroused by a knocking at the door. This brought Poupet, who stopped to give the Spaniard his chapeau and collect the fee, before answering the summons.

"If you do not see me again within the next few days, you shall hear from me, Señor," said Delicado, addressing himself to the barber, who acknowledged the remark with a smile of interest, and permitted his new customer to go without another word.

Quite satisfied with the progress he had made, Jallot retired to his cabinet, where he was presently disturbed by Poupet.

"Dare iz a lill' boy whad wand fo' to see yo', Michié," announced the quadroon. "He got a leddah he say he must give yo' hisse'f."

"I'll see him at once," said the barber.

Poupet ushered in a shy-looking, forlorn figure, whose tousled yellow head reached no higher than the arm of Jallot's chair. He was pretty in

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

a wraith-like way, and altogether an appealing little fellow. In his hand he clasped a crumpled note, which looked as though it had once been dainty.

Jallot's interest and sympathy were instantly aroused. He held out his hand encouragingly to the boy, who kept back in timidity; but, after looking into those kindly gray eyes, and hearing himself called "*petit gamin*," he suddenly advanced with confidence and thrust the letter into the barber's fingers.

Before opening it, the Frenchman directed Poupet to give the little visitor a seat close beside him.

The note was addressed in a feminine hand unknown to Jallot. He broke the seal and read:

"To 'Sieur Victor Jallot: I cannot resist, Monsieur, the temptation to send you this little boy, who is without friend or protector. I have formed a great attachment for the child, and would adopt him myself, save that my foster-father, Herr Froebel, has admonished me that it would be undesirable. I know, Monsieur, that you are not indifferent to the woes of those about you, and I have thought that you might find it in your feeling heart to give this unfortunate boy a home. I have experienced a doubt as to the propriety of suggesting such a course to you, yet I know you will not take this as a sign of boldness, but rather as a mark of the esteem in which I hold you. Adieu, Monsieur. I pray God that He will

JALLOT IS CALLED "PAPOUTE"

shed upon you His blessing and His light. Antoinette Froebel."

Never had Antoinette been so gracious to Jallot as in that letter; never had she seemed to him so utterly adorable as in that first missive he had received from her hand. For a time he quite forgot its bearer in the happy contemplation of the thought that she believed him possessed of "a feeling heart," that she held him in esteem, that she had turned to him in confidence, and that she had closed her letter in so sweet a spirit of solicitude. Jallot was deeply touched. A glow of tenderness came over his face, softening the firm lines of his expressive lips, and the light of it shone in his eyes.

The little boy, watching him, smiled wistfully. He was being ignored and he wished that the barber would extend to him the beatific attention now bestowed upon the letter. Presently the man folded it with something like a caress, and the child longed for a touch of those wonderful hands.

Much to his satisfaction, Jallot at last turned and looked him over with a kind yet whimsical expression, asking, "So I am to adopt you?"

The boy had lost every atom of fear. He spoke with compelling confidence. "If you please, Monsieur!"

Jallot leaned back in his chair, and, simulating a fatherly tone, inquired the child's name.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"Jérôme!" he answered, and then asked ingenuously, "What's yours?"

"Victor, thank you. How old are you?"

"Seven, Monsieur! How old are you?"

Jallot laughed at this question and replied, "More than twenty-seven." Then after a little silence, "Where are your parents?"

"Never had any—only a father." This piteous declaration was made in quite a grown up fashion, as though he meant to convey the idea that he really did not care; however, it was plain enough that he did.

"And where is he?"

An expression of woe crept into the boy's eyes. "He—is—dead!" The reply came out in a dry sob, in spite of his brave effort to control himself.

"*Cher petit*," exclaimed Jallot with infinite sympathy, and, lifting Jérôme in his arms, held him there for a few moments without speaking, while the child cried on his shoulder.

"Look here!" said the barber. With the idea of diverting the boy, he took a coin and held it in his palm. "See?" Jérôme nodded. "Now I shut it up tightly in my fist. Now I throw it away!" He made a pass through the air like a magician, and opened his hand slowly. The coin had disappeared. "Gone! I think it is in your left ear!" He apparently found it there, much to the child's wonderment and delight. "I have no doubt that I could coax another out of your right

JALLOT IS CALLED "PAPOUTE"

ear. Let us see!" He deftly extracted a second coin, manipulated it as he had the first, and placed them both in the waif's hand. "You see, we shall never want for money while you are about!"

Jérôme was fascinated. He forgot all about his woe in this new found play. "More!" he begged.

Jallot enacted the role of prestidigitator for nearly an hour, the while making firm their friendship. After producing, in many mysterious ways, a great variety of trinkets, he asked, "What would you like now?"

By this time Jérôme was convinced that he had but to name a desire to see it fulfilled. "I want a father!" he announced seriously.

The barber waved his hand in the air, and muttered some high-sounding gibberish. "Done!" he declared; "here he is!" This last, holding out his arms.

That was the most fascinating play the boy had ever known, for it seemed to be real at the same time. "Papoute!" he exclaimed, embracing Jallot. It was the Creole word for little father.

"Very well," laughed the man; "I shall be your 'Papoute,' though the word scarcely fits my height. Is there anything else you want?"

Jérôme studied awhile. "I'd like a little dog."

"Very well! Just at present I have no dogs up my sleeve, but we can get you one." He called to Poupet. The quadroon thrust his head in the door. Jallot beckoned him to enter, saying,

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"Poupet, this is Jérôme, who has come to live with us." Paying no attention to the amazement this remark occasioned, he went on. "Jérôme, this is Poupet, with whom we are obliged to live." Now he addressed himself again to his assistant. "You are to take Jérôme and buy him a dog."

"A dog?" groaned the quadroon. "*Mon Dieu*, Michié, he will bark!"

"Naturally!" Then to the boy, "You have your money?"

Jérôme displayed the coins. "Yes, thank you!" He was a polite little fellow.

"Then *au revoir*, Jérôme!"

"*Au revoir*, Papoute."

Poupet took the lad's hand, and led him temptingly down the street where the shops showed their alluring wares. He did not like dogs and did not propose to be bothered with one. He did, however, like Americans. This was due entirely to the generosity of Osbourne, who, in the quadroon's estimation, ranked next in beneficence to Jallot. Therefore when he and his charge reached the neighborhood of the quay, and came to a pause before the window of a ship-chandler, who made gay his front with a display of flags, it occurred to Poupet that it would be a fine thing to buy a banner, and the one which attracted him most was the emblem of the United States.

He cunningly pointed out its beauty to Jérôme, and intimated that his master had long wished to

JALLOT IS CALLED "PAPOUTE"

own a flag to flaunt over the atelier. Observing that this sophistry impressed his charge, Poupet added that, if they should buy the colors, they would not only please Jallot immensely, but also win the commendation of a certain Monsieur Osbourne, who could be relied upon to reward their patriotism with coins sufficient to purchase a dozen dogs. He tempted the boy further, saying that the Fourth of July, which was not far distant, would offer them a splendid occasion to raise the flag; and went on enthusiastically to describe the elaborate ceremony which should attend that event. The quadroon slyly concluded his cajoling with the insistence that the whole affair must be kept a secret. All these blandishments appealed compellingly to Jérôme; so that at last he yielded and bought the largest flag which his money could obtain.

CHAPTER XI

THE COMPLAINT OF MONSIEUR GAZONAC

On Sunday afternoon, the day after the coming of Jérôme, Antoinette received a note from Jallot, telling her that he had decided to adopt the boy, and expressing himself as grateful to her for having selected him to foster one in whom she professed so great an interest. That brief epistle, simple but elegant in form, warmed the heart of Antoinette, who had confidently expected that he would receive the boy into his household. Nevertheless the girl began to wonder how it was that she had been so sure of his beneficence.

She was sitting alone under the gallery of the villa on the Bayou Road, and looking out across terrace and orchard to where the purple shades of dusk crowded upon the russet tints of the after-glow. Her thoughts, the hushed evening, and the violet lights, made up for her a mood which should have had its tender sway unbroken, since it is only in such hours that the soul becomes the dear confidant of the flesh, and in that communion one may hear the voice of the spirit, which speaks, as it were, in music, not in words.

THE COMPLAINT OF GAZONAC

Antoinette, hearing her name pronounced, came out of that wondrous spell, wide-eyed and staring, like a child from sleep. She turned and over her shoulder saw the rugged figure of Gazonac silhouetted against the lazy lifting moon. To her he seemed an intruder upon the exalted peace of her meditations. His greeting, the flourish of his hat, the scrape of his boots upon the tiles,—all were discords.

Sure of his welcome, he drew a chair close to hers, and began retailing the petty gossip of his world, much of which she scarcely heard. From that he went on to speak of himself, a theme he fancied he had well prepared; and, mistaking her silence for rapt attention, he ventured still further to proclaim how his thoughts dwelt about her.

Roused to the necessity of warning him that he was in peril of chagrin, Antoinette told him that he must not talk to her of love; but Gazonac, taking her words as merely a pretty form of coquetry, importuned her ardently. With that resoluteness, full of vertical affirmation, which she used when feeling intensely, the girl dismissed him, for she realized that in dealing with Gazonac no half-weighted measures would serve to silence his suit.

His failure stung him to the quick. His anger even gathered vehemence through the night, and in the morning he wore that rage, as he did his heart, upon his sleeve. There were few in those places where tongues wagged in lieu of better

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

employment, who did not know that he had undertaken the conquest of Antoinette. Possessed of that knowledge, the dullest might safely hazard the guess that his present passion had to do with an unhappy turn in his love affair.

Poupet, who probably knew better than anyone else, the business of the atelier's patrons, was immediately struck by this thought when Gazonac came lowering into the shop on Monday morning.

Ludwig Froebel was just rising from the barber chair, and Villebois was lolling on the window seat.

"Michié Gazonac, yo air jus' in time," said Poupet. "De chair is empty!"

"Go to the devil!" returned the Frenchman. "Where is Jallot?"

"In the throes of his muse. Like me, you will have to wait upon his leisure!" This from Villebois.

"I didn't ask you!" snapped Gazonac, and he wheeled about abruptly to Froebel, who was gazing at him in wonderment. "What are you staring at?" he demanded.

The German quailed. "Nothing!" he murmured.

"Then look in the glass!"

The quadroon laughed. "Oh, such a humor!" he cried. "Ah knew dad Michié Gazonac would run into some bad luck. De night 'fore last he lit a candle in de atelier when dare was already a

THE COMPLAINT OF GAZONAC

light."

"What's that to you?" asked Gazonac, his wrath mounting.

"Nottin' ad all. Only Ah tink dad Michié Froebel can tell whad de trooble iz wid yo'. His daughter, Mamzelle Antoinette—no doubt she has give yo' de midden." Poupet laughed again with great heartiness.

Gazonac's rage mastered him. "You hornet!" he cried. "I, too, have a sting!" He whipped out the blade from his sword cane, and made after the youth, who, in great alarm dodged about the barber chair, while Froebel, in fright, sought refuge upon the window seat.

Round the chair, then the table, lacquered screen and the music stand, went Poupet and Gazonac.

"A dollar to a picayune that Poupet does the first quarter in a minute," shouted Villebois to Froebel, who called for help, as the quadron circled the chair again, panting in terror, and made for the cabinet door.

There he turned about quickly, dreading a stab in the back, and faced his pursuer, who began prodding him in the ribs with the point of his blade. Hysterical with fright, Poupet cried out for Jallot. The door behind him suddenly opened, and he fell back into the arms of his master.

"Spare him, Monsieur," exclaimed Jallot with

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

a smile. "If you take his life, who will shave me?"

"I'll tickle his ribs for him," stormed Gazonac, threatening Poupet.

Jallot made a gesture of protest. "But not like that, Monsieur. Your sword is not a club!" He pushed the quadroon aside. "Hold it lightly—with the fingers," he advised, illustrating with the pen he carried. "So—giving easy play for the wrist!"

This was all very amusing to Villebois and Poupet, but not to Gazonac. "I have not come to you for instruction," he said in a dudgeon; and added, "His impudence is intolerable—the nigger!"

"Monsieur Gazonac, the boy's father was as white as you," returned Jallot. "Poupet, what is the trouble?"

The quadroon, keeping close behind his master for protection, replied, "Ah juz say dad he get de midden from Mamzelle Froebel!"

"A chance thrust which drew—blood!" chuckled Villebois, who had ground for amusement, since he knew what it was to be dismissed by Antoinette.

"A poor jest, Poupet!" declared Jallot. "It's not fair to strike a wounded man."

"Take heart, Monsieur," chuckled Viliebois, addressing Gazonac; "you are in good company. You are now eligible to that distinguished clique

THE COMPLAINT OF GAZONAC

known as 'The Rejected of Mademoiselle of the Magnolias.' "

"My Antoinette will none of you fire-eaters have," asseverated Froebel seriously.

Villebois grinned. "She has been home from abroad less than a year, yet already the clique musters a score!"

"Perhaps you are one!" grunted Gazonac.

"I own it with pride," acknowledged the Creole. "And there are Dominique, Grandpré, St. Denis, Crozat—a noble company. By and by the coterie will include the whole male population of New Orleans. It will be a disgrace not to have been rejected by Mademoiselle Froebel!"

Jallot nodded his approval of this sentiment, whereupon Gazonac quizzed him intently. "And—you! Where do you come in?"

"Oh, leave me out," was the quick reply.

"I think it is you, who are responsible for this clique, which Villebois speaks of so smartly," complained Gazonac. "Mademoiselle Froebel comes here thrice a week for dancing lessons. She needs instruction—she has spent her life in Paris," he concluded sarcastically.

"You forget, Monsieur, that I am exempt," countered Jallot with gaiety, "for I am merely a tonsorial artist, a disciple of Terpsichore, a fencing master, a scribbler, etc., etc.; in other words—one who toils with head and hand—a craftsman! And therefore, according to our Creole code, not

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

a gentleman!"

Froebel objected. "*Ach*, no, Jallot! The gentleman is what he is, not what he does!"

"Your true gentleman does not work at all," contended Gazonac.

"Quite right," assented Villebois. "Jallot has made a tidy fortune—let him stop and be a gentleman."

Jallot laughed.

"Ah tell yo' why dad man work," volunteered Poupet. "'Cause he pay de rent o' poor Madame Laurent; also de bills o' ol' De Neville; dad he send de 'tites Mamzelles Galliard to school; dad he give to diz an' dad—keep nottin' fo' hisself—"

"You're absurd! Be quiet," commanded Jallot.

"It is all true," persisted the quadroon. "Also he start dad orphang asylum fo' de liddle redemptioners!"

"Will you keep still?" thundered Jallot, twisting his assistant's ear.

Poupet would not keep still. He went on: "Also 'cause Mallet no got money 'nuf to go marrie Colinette—he buy dem houze fo' weddin' presend."

Jallot, seeing nothing else to do, gave the quadroon a box across the cheek, which sent him spinning. Nevertheless, Poupet, making sure of his retreat through the cabinet door, called back, "Kick me, kick me, yo' no make me shud up!"

THE COMPLAINT OF GAZONAC

Hah, Messieurs, Ah tell you, 'Sieur Jallot more gentleman den any whad iz here!' With that he disappeared.

Since it was near the time when Jallot expected Antoinette, he tactfully cleared the atelier of his customers.

As Gazonac left, in the company of Villebois, he saw coming down the Rue du Maine a young woman who looked for all the world as though summer had become incarnate in the form of Antoinette. He uttered an oath, and turned in the other direction.

"She is very difficult," observed Villebois.

"For us! But not for him, I fancy."

The Creole's leathery countenance became a legend of surprise. "You are not serious?" he asked.

"You will presently see how serious I am! That fellow, Jallot, has a cunning way with women. A man like him, with passing good looks and a superficial wit, can hoodwink the best of them; but he will find it a different matter when it comes to dealing with a man. You Creoles have a saying, 'Joke with the monkey as much as you please, but take good care not to handle his tail.' Jallot has gone too far. I shall fetch him up with a sharp twist. *Au revoir!* I have a rendezvous with Delicado."

They parted, Villebois to seek the solace of The Pig and Whistle; Gazonac to carry out a

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

project which had just occurred to him, and one that had nothing whatever to do with the Spaniard.

CHAPTER XII

THE MALICE OF HIS ENEMY

Gazonac, absorbed in thought, walked slowly along the Rue Chartres, and by the time he reached his destination—the office of “Le Moniteur de la Louisiane,” on the Rue Conti—he had settled the problem which occupied his mind.

“Le Moniteur de la Louisiane” was a newspaper edited and owned by a Creole named Allard, a man of middle age, clever and unscrupulous. He looked like a pedagogue, talked like a pickpocket, and lived like a parasite. Being always in debt, he could have lived no other way. His money voyaged from him by one route: across the gambling table.

He made a friend of Gazonac by borrowing from him, and increased the obligation at every opportunity. He made a great many other friends in the same way. It is not every one who could care for that particular sort of friendship, but Allard prided himself upon his debts. He kept them in a remarkable state of preservation, explaining that to settle an obligation was to lose a crony; and since

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

he valued them all so highly he grieved at the thought of losing one. Possibly he was a humorist. Certainly he was possessed of a keen wit. Keen is precisely what it was, for there was nothing gentle in his jests. They emanated from his head, not his heart. He said of himself, "I smell of printer's ink, which is incense compared with the odor of the paragraphs I write."

These very paragraphs made his paper famous, or rather infamous. Composed with art, they implied much more than he dared set down, but rarely did he write what he could not prove, or suffer a scratch of his pen to make a formidable enemy.

Through goggles, worn athwart the bridge of a long, thin nose, Allard looked up at Gazonac as the latter opened the door. A counter, reared more for physical protection than anything else, separated the editor from the visitor. Behind this barrier was a long table, heaped with letter-press, pamphlets, scraps of paper and thumbed books in disorder. There Allard sat in his shirt sleeves, his worn, plum-colored tail coat hanging over the back of the chair. Beyond him, amid a litter of discarded proofs and torn copies of "Le Moniteur," lay the press, the arms of its great screw, like a stiffened weather-vane, pointing aimlessly over the woolly head of a young negro who was tentatively performing its toilette. Cases of type, brown with age, and bearing the marks of many an inky finger, stood upon decrepit stilts against

THE MALICE OF HIS ENEMY

the dingy wall beside a crazy rack of galleys, and stared blindly across the room at an immaculate bastion of white paper, all ready for the press. Dusty heaps of old folios, boxes of "pied" fonts and the débris of years undisturbed, established without a doubt the fact that broom and dust brush were as unwelcome there as collectors of accounts. Permeating the entire place, was the pungent smell of printer's ink, mingling with a stale, heavy odor, explained by endless rows of cigarette stumps which decorated the editor's desk, like a miniature battery.

"I am exceedingly glad to see you, Monsieur," said Allard, putting down his pen and approaching the counter to shake the Frenchman's hand. "I was saying to myself, when I heard your tread, 'Here comes a bill on a pair of determined legs.' My mind immediately arranged the rentier, the tailor and the printer's-ink-maker upon the wheel, and placed my last picayune on the tailor."

"You are incorrigible," laughed Gazonac. "Happily I am in funds, and perhaps you will do me the favor to accept a loan."

"Since you put it that way, I do not see how I could well refuse," said Allard, stroking his chin with satisfaction.

"How much do you owe the tailor?"

"I haven't the faintest idea. He is such an admirable accountant that I never think of bothering my head about the figures."

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"He would doubtless be satisfied with fifty dollars?"

"He would be thunderstruck," exclaimed Allard. "It will be like discovering a nest of moidores in an old waistcoat. You are very liberal!"

Already Gazonac was counting out the money. "I am charmed to accommodate you."

"What do you want of me?" purred Allard. "I hope I shall be able to oblige you." He was cautious, even with his friends.

"I'll write it down," returned Gazonac. The editor gave him a pen and a sheet of paper. After considerable labor he finished the composition of a paragraph and offered it to Allard. The editor looked it over carefully and inquired, "To whom does this refer?"

"To a barber!"

"But this person seems to be more than that."

"He is!"

"You mean Victor Jallot?"

"Yes!"

Allard grinned dubiously. "He has a long arm!"

"I will protect you. Be assured of that!"

"Very well. I will publish the paragraph in my next issue."

"When will that be?"

Allard leisurely rolled a cigarette as he replied, "Either on Wednesday or Thursday. Certainly not on Friday, but possibly on Saturday."

It was late on Thursday afternoon when Gazo-

THE MALICE OF HIS ENEMY.

nac received one of the first copies of "Le Moniteur" from the press, and with great satisfaction read his paragraph, which occupied a conspicuous position under an account of a ball at the Governor's house.

The next morning he went to the atelier to be shaved, and while Poupet's back was turned, laid the paper on the window seat. It was still there at eleven o'clock when Jallot came out of his cabinet, watch in hand, and inquired of the quadroom, "Has Mademoiselle Froebel arrived?"

"No, Michié!" replied Poupet, who was tuning his violin, while Jérôme, seated demurely upon the music-stand, watched him with interest.

The barber looked at his watch again. It was five minutes after eleven. Antoinette was usually prompt on the hour. He began pacing the floor restlessly, turning at every sound from the court with the hope that it was her step. Ten minutes past eleven! Now he fancied that something ill must have befallen her; and he became convinced that she was in dire distress. His impulse was to go in search of her, but his reason argued that he would be making a fool of himself.

It was not at all like Jallot to let his imagination run on so extravagantly, but a change had come over him. Where once he had looked forward with mere pleasure to the hours with Antoinette, he now anticipated them with craving. And as he waited that morning it suddenly became clear to

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

him that he was what they called "in love" with her.

He asked himself, fearfully, had God, the Great Conjuror, done this, or was it the working of a malevolent fate? He had been happy in her dear companionship. How would it be now that he was conscious of a mastering passion?

His heart became cold with misgiving, and again hot with hope. It was neither his position nor his degree which cast shadows across the future, but the shade of himself, showing small and impotent, as the true lover's must. How insignificant he seemed, how humble he felt before her image which he enveloped in a glory like the mantle of the sun!

Closing his eyes to that imaginary light, he beheld a thousand obstacles looming before him. He saw himself a dwarfed figure surmounting one barrier only to encounter another. In a twinkling the mound of doubt became the mountain of despair, and far beyond that, on the uppermost height, surrounded by the moat of convention and the battlement of pride, lay the citadel of her heart.

Before she rapped at the door that morning he knew that she was there. His hand was on the latch as the knocker fell from her fingers. She entered with her ever-radiant, "*Bonjour, Monsieur!*" and added, "Pardon—I am late—it was my *modiste!*"

He bowed. He did not dare to speak. She

THE MALICE OF HIS ENEMY

caught sight of Jérôme, who came running to her, and caught him in her arms and kissed him. "How pretty you look in your new clothes, Jérôme!" she exclaimed, holding him off and examining him.

"Papoute give me dem!" he explained.

"Papoute?" She was puzzled.

"That's Creole for 'little father,'" Jallot ventured.

"Him!" cried Jérôme, gaily pointing at the barber.

Antoinette laughed a little. "I never heard anything so cunning," she declared.

"Papoute can take money out of your ears," confided the boy.

Even Caresse, who stood by, became interested.

"He'll do it for you, won't you, Papoute?" It was an assertion and a plea in one breath. "Please!" he entreated, seeing Jallot shake his head.

Antoinette, observing this by-play, insisted that she would be charmed to have her *maitre de dance* take a coin from her ear. She had never seen Jallot embarrassed in the least and she was woman enough to delight in thus tormenting him a little.

He smiled, as much as to say: "You order—I obey!" and, turning from her, surreptitiously took the flower, which adorned the lapel of his coat, and palmed it. "If Mademoiselle will be so gracious as to permit!" He spoke then with composure. "You see—nothing." He showed his hand ap-

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

parently empty, made a pass over Antoinette's head, stretched out his arm and slowly opened his fist, discovering a rose in his palm.

"Wonderful, Monsieur!" declared the girl playfully.

Jérôme was puzzled. "Papoute, you took /money from my ear," he complained.

"Of course," returned Jallot readily; "rupees from yours—roses from Mademoiselle's!"

She smiled and accepted the flower he offered her.

"I want a rose!" spoke up the boy.

"You shall have this one," said Antoinette in a sacrificial tone, "if you will come with me and put on my slippers."

"And you, Mademoiselle, shall have a whole bouquet from my garden," declared the master with gallantry.

Antoinette gave him a look of thanks, and, taking the hand of Jérôme, followed Caresse into the dressing room. They were out again in a few minutes, and presently Jallot was transported to Elysium at the touch of his pupil's fingers as he led her through the steps of a dance. When at last she expressed a desire to rest, he went with her to the window-seat.

"You think I am improving?" she asked.

"I am in despair," he exclaimed. "I really have nothing to teach you."

"Then I need no more lessons?" she teased.

THE MALICE OF HIS ENEMY

An almost tragic look came over his face. "*Mon Dieu!* No, Mademoiselle! I shall invent some new steps at once!"

"And I shall learn them—if you will be patient!"

"Patient!" He looked away for fear his eyes would betray him. "If you only knew how happy I am to instruct you—"

"And I to be instructed!"

"You are very kind to me, Mademoiselle."

"You are kind to everyone."

He shrugged his shoulders in way of protest.

"Oh, I have heard," she went on; "and I have seen. Now, there is little Jérôme. His father, as I learned, was a worthless Creole who died, leaving him absolutely destitute. Caresse and I found him crying on a door-step. I am sure that it was more than kind of you to give the boy a home."

"You sent him to me, Mademoiselle. That was sufficient to engage my sympathy; and then, like me, he is an orphan."

"But you were never in such distress as he."

"Worse," said Jallot. "I came to New Orleans a refugee from France in the days of the terror; and though my way was paid, the ship's agents seized me when I landed here—sold me into bondage until I should work out the price of my passage."

Antoinette looked at him with new interest.

"Ah, you were a redemptioner!" There was a

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

note of triumph in her voice.

"Yes, I was, and am, and must be, until I shall have struck off the shackles of my shop."

They were silent for a little while. Then she reflected, "You must have been very young when you came to Louisiana."

"I was fifteen, Mademoiselle!"

"You came alone?"

"I arrived alone; my mother died on the voyage."

The velvety quality of her eyes showed luminously to him. He became aware then of the woman's infinite tenderness which had so long been concealed from him under an imperious demeanor. Her expression invited his confidence.

"I was more fortunate than many of my fellow-refugees," he went on. "I fell into good hands. Old Dominique, the barber, bought me. I worked out my redemption in his shop. I became his assistant, and when the time came for him to go, he left me his clientèle."

"Who—?" she hesitated. He encouraged her with a smile. "Who was your father, Monsieur?"

"A soldier of France," he answered simply; but there was a ring in his voice that spoke of pride; and though she was interested to know more, she felt that there was the end of the chapter. But she speculated upon it, for it said so much and yet so little. Whoever his father was, she was sure of one thing—that he had been brave.

THE MALICE OF HIS ENEMY

"A moment ago, Monsieur," she resumed; "you spoke of 'striking off the shackles of your shop.' You mean by that that you are not always going to be—?"

"A barber—and all the rest of it?" he cut in. "I hope not, but I must be patient; I must put by a little sum before I can realize my ambition."

She demurred before asking: "What is that?"

He could not but smile, she was so sweetly serious. "I have some messages for the world."

"What a pretty way to put it," she commented. "I understand," she nodded dreamily. "I remember in your play—"

"You got my message?" he questioned her eagerly, flinging out his expressive hand in beseechment.

"I am not sure, but you made me long to do something for the unhappy—to aid the struggles of the lowly."

Antoinette illustrated her words with an action so divine that Jallot, his heart in his eyes, cried out: "You did get my message!"

She wondered a little at his intense enthusiasm, but ascribed it to the artist's gratitude for her appreciation. "It is a fine thing, Monsieur, to make one feel like that," she continued; "but it seems wrong that you, who bear such messages, should squander here"—she made a vague gesture—"the best of your youth and inspiration."

"Yet if I give up this shop, Mademoiselle, I must

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

lose you as a pupil," he submitted, without any suggestion of being gallant.

"Though not as a friend," she assured him.

"A friend!" he exclaimed, and his voice shook a little. "What a beginning!" His tone softened and a look of yearning appeared in his face, as he added: "Ah, Mademoiselle, if you—"

"I—I shall be your friend," she interrupted, hastily rising. "I have overstayed my time—I must go!"

"You will come for your lesson on Monday?" he anxiously inquired.

"Oh, yes, Monsieur!" So saying, she roused Caresse, who had fallen asleep on the bench, and disappeared into the dressing room.

Jérôme, having waited dutifully until Jallot was unoccupied, now came running to him. "Papoute, make me dance too," he besought.

Jallot caught the boy up in his arms. "Of course! That is part of every gentleman's education. You shall fence as well!" He was in high spirits. He placed Jérôme in the barber chair and advised him to detain Mademoiselle Froebel while he gathered a bouquet for her.

Left to his own devices, the boy sat still but a moment. Looking about for some diversion, he saw the copy of "Le Moniteur," where Gazonac had left it on the window seat. He slipped out of the chair, and picking it up, amused himself by pretending to read after the manner of a man.

THE MALICE OF HIS ENEMY

When Antoinette, bonnetted for the street, reappeared and saw this precocious performance, she tiptoed to the chair and kissed the boy over his shoulder. He affected to be too much engrossed to notice this demonstration.

"You dear child," she exclaimed; "can you read?"

"Yes, Mamzelle," he returned, and to prove his erudition, pointed to a line and began spelling out an account of a dance at the Governor's house. Antoinette's eyes, running ahead of his, encountered a paragraph, which immediately challenged her attention. She drew the paper from Jérôme and read to herself:

"A certain Don Juan, in the person of a barber, whose affairs with a quadron are notorious, is boasting of his conquest of a charming and distinguished young woman to whom he gives private instruction in his atelier. . . ."

Antoinette gave a little exclamation of amazement, and read on with feverish haste:

"Such vaunting would be odious enough on the part of one of her own station, but coming from a barber, it is intolerable. The friends of the young woman in question would do well to amputate the tongue of this fellow."

For a moment Antoinette stood dumfounded, the paper crunched in her hand. "It means me—and—Jallot!" she gasped. The thought, which had merely staggered her at first, now infuriated

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

her. Those great, velvety eyes grew small and the flame of a passionate resentment danced in them. She threw down the paper and started toward the court door, as Jallot entered from the garden, his arms filled with roses. He smilingly intercepted her and would have offered the flowers; but, seeing the whiteness of her face and a look of disdain in her eyes, he drew back in astonishment.

"I have had my last lesson, Monsieur," she announced ominously. "Send your bill!"

She was gone before he could assemble his scattered wits, and he stood still, gazing helplessly after her. Jallot had never felt so deep a hurt. He lost sense of where he was for a moment, remembering only the contempt of her glance, the scorn of her words.

He did not see Jérôme, who was gathering up the roses he had dropped, or Poupet, who, having witnessed Antoinette's reading of "Le Moniteur," retrieved the paper and scanned it hurriedly. He, too, read Gazonac's paragraph and then handed the sheet to his master.

Jallot's eyes, following Poupet's finger on the printed page, read the canard with gathering wrath. When he finished, he struck it with his fist, and gave an exclamation of understanding.

"Poupet, my hat—my sword-cane!" He spoke quietly, but with a timbre of voice which made his assistant tremble. Nevertheless the quadroom made haste to stroke down the nap of his master's

THE MALICE OF HIS ENEMY

beaver and to test the spring of his weaponed walking stick. As he handed these articles to Jallot, he ventured to ask: "Where yo' goin', Michié?"

"To give the editor a private lesson in fencing," was the laconic reply.

CHAPTER XIII

AN EDITOR WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR

Up the Rue Royale went Jallot at a vigorous gait, which soon brought him to the office of "Le Moniteur de la Louisiane." The editor was not within, but he learned from the colored attendant that Allard might be found at the Café des Emigrés. Back across the city, by the way of the Rue Chartres, lazily alive with its shops and peddlers, who called out their wares in monotonous drones, stalked the barber. He knew the Café des Emigrés well. It was just around the corner from his atelier, near the Rue St. Philippe, and was the headquarters of the St. Domingans, for there only could they obtain their favorite liqueur "*le petit gouave*." The cabaret was somewhat more commodious than The Pig and Whistle, and boasted of two stories, with a grilled balcony overhanging the banquette. A gaily striped awning protected its front from the hot sun, and under it gathered the usual clump of café habitués.

Some of them nodded to Jallot as he passed in,

WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR

and one said: "Did you ever see anyone walk so briskly in June as that barber!"

The old Domingan proprietor of the cabaret came forward and greeted him.

"Do you know Monsieur Allard, the editor of "Le Moniteur?" inquired Jallot.

"Oh, yes, Monsieur. There he sits, by himself, in the corner." He jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

Most of the tables were surrounded by chattering groups, but Allard seemed content to drink his liqueur in solitude.

"Will you kindly say to him that Victor Jallot begs the honor of his acquaintance?"

"Certainly, Monsieur!" The old Domingan went directly to Allard. Jallot watched them out of the corner of his eye as they held a consultation in whispers. He saw the editor shift uneasily, glance furtively toward the door and at last nod in reluctant consent.

"He will be delighted, Monsieur Jallot," lied the keeper of the café.

The barber followed him to where Allard sat, and when he had been introduced, accepted, with a bow, the chair placed opposite the editor.

"*Gouave?*" asked Allard, tapping his glass.

"Yes, Monsieur; but permit me!—your goblet wants refilling." Jallot called to a yellow boy in a white apron and gave him the order. "You are doubtless curious to know why I have intruded

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

upon your reveries, Monsieur," he began.

"I am never curious," returned the editor in a monotone, lazily flicking a fly that browsed on the rim of his glass. "But since you apparently expect me to be, I ask you why I am honored with your attention?"

"Jallot studied his vis-à-vis before replying. "It is a very delicate matter. It is your waistcoat!"

"My waistcoat?" Allard looked down in faint surprise at the garment, which was of a dingy red color.

"Yes! It does not harmonize with the rest of your toilette; indeed, though I regret to say so, it is in such bad taste as to be—pardon me!—offensive."

Politely and in a drawl, Allard rejoined, "I am sorry for that, Monsieur, but it suits my fancy. I expect to wear it the season out."

"I protest," persisted Jallot in an even tone; "it is a blot in the lovely color scheme of nature."

Allard waited until the boy served the liqueurs, and then remarked: "I hate to pain you, but I must confess to a certain affection for this waistcoat, and much as I should like to please you by discarding it, I really must refuse."

"This is a serious matter, Monsieur Allard. Will nothing move you?"

"No, Monsieur Jallot, I am obdurate upon that point. But in lieu of changing my waistcoat," he temporized, "is there nothing else I can do to con-

WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR

ciliate you?"

The barber smiled. "Yes! One thing; give me the honor of killing you."

"Ah, a duel?" This with supreme indifference.

"You understand me perfectly!"

"But I am not so skilled with the sword—"

"As with the pen?" interjected Jallot.

"Quite so!"

"Then I will give you fencing lessons—gratis!"

Allard grinned at this retort and said: "You are very kind, but you would discover in me a backward pupil; and I fancy that you are impatient—about the waistcoat!"

"Exactly! I am impatient! Yet there are other weapons beside the foil. Custom gives you the choice." Jallot leaned back in his chair and took a sip of sirop.

"I should suggest the pen," returned the editor, monotonously. "That would be just! You are skilled with it, yourself, as I can testify, having read some excellent verse of your composition."

Jallot bowed gravely. "I am highly complimented, Monsieur. Your idea is worth considering, provided you should print something like this in your newspaper: Eh—I, Marcel Allard, editor of *Le Moniteur de la Louisiane*, am a scoundrel and a liar—"

"An interesting beginning," interposed the other indolently.

"Wait!" commanded Jallot. "I, Marcel Allard,

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

etc., etc., am a scoundrel and a liar, having published in my issue of such a date a scurrilous paragraph about a barber, accusing him of notorious relations with an unnamed person of color, and asserting that he vaunts his conquest of a certain young lady to whom he gives private lessons in his atelier—”

“No wonder that my waistcoat offends you—”

Unheeding the interruption, Jallot went on: “The aforesaid barber is a gentleman of unblemished character, and the paragraph referred to is a piece of arrant mendacity.”

“Your pen has a point, Monsieur!”

“Wait! I have not yet driven it home,” objected Jallot, and continued: “I, Marcel Allard, humbly apologize for the slander, and trust that this retraction of the same will give the above mentioned gentleman every satisfaction without recourse to a passage of arms.”

“Admirably put,” commented the editor, “though, perhaps, unnecessarily severe.”

The barber paused, in the process of rolling a cigarette, to inquire: “You approve of it?”

“In part, yes! But let me own, in all seriousness, Monsieur, that I am surprised to learn that the offensive paragraph refers to you.”

“Your remark requires explanation!”

“The paragraph was written by a friend of mine,” drawled Allard. “He assured me it was a jest. I published it as such.”

WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR

"I object to that jest," retorted Jallot sharply. "You will give me the name of its author and print the retraction, Monsieur, or I shall kill you—without lessons."

"My dear fellow, we have no cause to quarrel—over my waistcoat. The author of the paragraph is René Gazonac."

"Ah!" exclaimed the barber, in an ominous tone, adding with sarcasm, "Then it was a great jest!"

"As to the retraction: I would edit your phraseology somewhat—merely in so far as it refers to me as a liar and a scoundrel." The editor pushed his glasses up on his nose and looked through them at his inquisitor with an expression of benevolence.

Jallot blew three perfect rings of smoke into the air and observed: "Between us, I have no doubt we can find words equally fitting."

"Let us say—more delicate," urged Allard.

"But the rest should stand!"

The editor drummed on the table as he considered. "Don't you think we might discover something more euphonious than 'arrant mendacity?'" he presently ventured.

"We might make it 'machiavelian mendacity,'" gibed Jallot.

Allard pressed his hand suddenly to his heart as though he had received a mortal hurt. "Ah, oh! I am done for," he gasped. "You have won, Monsieur!"

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

With a laugh, Jallot held out his hand across the table. "Then let us be friends!"

"I agree to that," said Allard, accepting the other's hand. "We might well collaborate upon the paragraph."

"At once—while we are in the mood."

"Our host keeps pens and papers!" Allard rapped on the table. The yellow boy responded and, at the editor's direction, set writing materials before them.

Jallot began the composition of the retraction. Presently he looked up. "I think we might find a substitute for 'scurrilous,'" he remarked.

"What do you say to 'sycophantic?'"

"I should prefer 'vituperious!'"

They debated the question and finally settled upon "libellous," with the understanding that the word should in no wise be construed to mean that there was ground for further action against the editor. They also disputed the employment of a phrase here and there, but finally drafted a paragraph which each pronounced satisfactory.

The affair being amicably settled, and Allard promising that the retraction should appear in the next issue of "Le Moniteur," the barber left the Café des Emigrés in a more amiable frame of mind than he had entered it. His serenity, however, was of short duration. On his way up the Rue Chartres, he encountered Antoinette coming gaily down the street under the amorous pilotage of a

WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR

Creole beau, and the convoy of Caresse. The girl affected not to see Jallot as he stepped from the narrow banquette into the mud in order that she might pass. This cut served to gall the wound he had received, and to sharpen his already bitter feeling toward Gazonac. It was fortunate for both men that they were not destined to meet until a night had taken counsel with Jallot's resentment; but, in the meantime, his philosophy, which had served him well in many a former strait, now proved impotent in this his hour of discomfiture. So, when he reached the atelier, his spirits flagged and through the eyes of an afflicted heart his whole world looked shadowed over with an impenetrable gloom.

He took refuge in his cabinet, refused himself to all comers, and drove his pen on through the daylight hours, on deep into the night until the candles spluttered and burned faint in the first glow of the morning. Out of his hurt and his hate he wrought, levying upon his poignant emotions, seizing the inspiration of an acute suffering, and welding the play of his keen feelings into the drama, which he had falteringly begun, and now finished in swift, vibrant periods, like the cries of violins in the finale of a minor symphony.

CHAPTER XIV

A LOTTERY, A LOVE AFFAIR AND AN INVITATION

When Jallot, looking little the worse for his all-night labors, came into the atelier the next morning, Poupet was polishing the foils.

"Michié," began the quadroon, "what day dese is—*hein?*"

"It should be Saturday," replied the barber, picking up the mail and taking it to the window seat to read.

"Yes, bud whad else, Michié?"

"The seventeenth of June!"

"No! You' fête day!" announced Poupet triumphantly.

"So it is! I must be getting old!"

The quadroon laughed. "Yo' air only thirty-fo'."

"I am getting old, Poupet. I shall soon be begging you to forget my birthdays."

"Yez, iv yo' wish," sighed the youth; "bud Ah always should remember, fo' Ah tink o' dad kindness whad yo' have been to me."

Jallot looked up from his letter. "I am repaid

A LOTTERY AND A LOVE AFFAIR

by your gratitude. You are a good fellow, Poupet. I am glad we are friends."

The quadroon, who was a creature of emotion, almost wept at this. He put his hand in his pocket and took out a ragged bit of cardboard. "Michié," he resumed, "Ah wish yo' led me give you'—" He finished by holding out the card to Jallot, who asked as he took it:

"What's this?"

"A loddery ticked. Ah play me doze noomber whad yo' help me to make."

"A lottery ticket," echoed the barber. "Well, I hope it will bring you luck."

Poupet refused to take the ticket back. "Dese a lill' presend dad Ah like fo' to make on yo' fête-day," he explained.

"For me?—my birthday?" Jallot was surprised and affected great delight.

"Yez, Michié. Ah wish dad yo' accep' de same wid my complemend iv yo' plez."

The master laid a hand on Poupet's shoulder, saying: "*Mon cher enfant*, this is magnificent of you. I accept it—as a gift of one friend to another—only with this condition: should it draw a prize, we share the spoil."

"Oh, thang yo', Michié," exclaimed the overjoyed youth, and supplemented, with conviction: "It goin' to make us rich fo' de day Ah bought de ticket Ah meed someboddie wid a squint eye. Dad iz de be' luck possib'."

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"I'm glad of that. We cannot have too much luck."

"Perhaps we get so much as one hoondred thousan' dolla'." Poupet's eyes grew big.

Jallot placed the ticket in an inside pocket, with an air of taking elaborate precautions against losing it. "But we must not be disappointed if we should draw but ten thousand—*hein?*"

"Yo' don't believe so much as me in dad lod-dery; bud yo' see befo' long, Michié."

"You are mistaken, Poupet. I have great faith in that number, only I do not believe in building your hopes too high." He resumed the reading of his mail, but soon paused to ask: "Have I any appointments to-day?"

"No, Michié. Ah took care dad yo' have dese fo' a holiday."

"Then I shall go to the Tivoli for luncheon. I have an invitation here from Monsieur Delicado. Lay out my blue coat and buff breeches."

"An' de red striped waistcoat. Dad go ve'y fine wid de res', fo' a fête, Michié."

"Just as you say, Poupet."

Thus, in gala attire, Jallot—his mood yielding to the cheery influence of a day designed for fêtes—sallied forth to the Tivoli, which lay about two miles back from the town on the Bayou St. Jean. This place of public entertainment consisted of a commodious mansion and a broad terrace overlooking an expanse of water, the head of Lake

A LOTTERY AND A LOVE AFFAIR

Pontchartrain. The house boasted broad verandas, the best dancing-floor in Louisiana, and a cuisine unequalled by the most famous chefs of the town. There the noblesse of New Orleans held their weekly balls, and noon and night came to dine in its tapestried rooms, or upon the terrace, which, in fine weather, was set out with tables under the magnolias. There the habitués of the place might watch the bathers in the bayou below, and the sails of the batteaux careening to the wind—dazzling white patches against the wonderful emerald blue of the water as the sun shone upon them; or, looking further away, see the taller top-sails of some trading craft from Pensacola courtesying with the rolling tide. Far off, across the lake, lay banks of rice and sugar-cane, undulating in the fresh salt wind blown inland from the Gulf; and beyond them again stretched dark belts of evergreens and forests of cypress.

The approach to the resort was the shell-crusted Bayou Road, winding up to an arched entrance of bay, orange and magnolia, and through that ambrosial bower the visitor made his way to the terrace.

On the very day that Jallot sought the Tivoli, the terrace tables, shaded yet exposed to every air that stirred, were generously occupied by gay parties, whose brilliant toilettes lent charming notes of color to a lively scene. Waiters bustled about, with the activity and quietude of ants, under

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

the all-seeing eye of the little French host, Moreau; on the upper veranda an orchestra of colored musicians fiddled the melodies of Gottschalk, so dear to Creole ears; and there was much laughter, the tinkling of glasses, and the whispering of lovers, who dined tête-à-tête under the bowers where the breezes shook the fragrant orange blossoms down upon them.

At one of these sequestered tables sat Otilie Trudeau and her fiancé. He was in a peevish mood, because he had been obliged to wait some time for his luncheon.

Moreau, making the rounds of the terrace, stopped to speak to him.

"Are we to wait forever?" asked the Creole testily.

"You shall be served in a moment, Monsieur. Perhaps you might care to glance at 'Le Moniteur?'" He took a copy of the paper from his pocket and handed it to Lemaitre. "I shall hurry the garçon."

"I hope you have made the sauce yourself," said Otilie, addressing the proprietor.

"To be sure, Mamzelle; and you will find none like it outside of Paris. Then the wine! Ah!" The host clasped his hands in ecstasy. "It is thirty years old, if a day!"

Lemaitre, who was reading the paper, looked up. "Stop talking about it and let us have it!"

Moreau bowed and went away.

A LOTTERY AND A LOVE AFFAIR

"Etienne, I wish you would not be so brusque with Moreau. He is doing his best."

Lemaitre paid no attention to Otilie's remarks, but went on reading. Presently he gave a gasp of anger.

"What is it now?" asked the girl with impatience. Her fiancé's ill temper was wearing upon her nerves.

He read from the paper in a rage. "'Conquest of a charming and distinguished young woman to whom he gives private instruction in his atelier!' *Nom de Dieu!* Read that!" He thrust the paper into her hands.

"What is it?" she inquired, searching the page.

"What is it?" he vociferated. "Proof! You! Jallot! *Ciel!* And I believed in you!"

Otilie read the paragraph, which had already caused Jallot so much unhappiness, and which now, in the eyes of the jealous Lemaitre, pointed unmistakably to an affair between his fiancée and the barber. "It is false—every word of it," declared the girl with indignation.

Lemaitre became sarcastic. "Naturally, you deny it!" Then he added, accusingly, "You are in love with that man. Have I not seen it with my own eyes!"

"Very well. Have it your way!" Otilie sighed with weariness and sank back in her chair.

"You take it calmly enough. To think how I have trusted you!"

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"Yes, you have trusted me too much, Monsieur. I will not trouble you to trust me any longer. Our betrothal is broken." She tore a ring from her finger and flung it down in front of him. "There is your ring!"

The Creole snatched it up and retorted with vehemence: "You are glad to be rid of me!"

"Very glad. I am lucky to discover what you are before it is too late. Our parents made a great mistake, as parents often do. Affection cannot be ordered about like a slave."

"You never loved me?" he cried.

"Hush," she protested. "Do not tell it to everyone on the terrace. No, I do not believe that I ever did love you, but I might have. I was fond of you, but you have killed all the affection I felt by your distrust, your jealousy, your insults."

"*Sacré bleu!*" he exclaimed. "I shall kill your lover—Jallot!"

Ottilie laughed derisively. "Curses do not make funerals," she gibed. "You have neither the skill nor the courage to overcome him. Besides, you have picked the wrong man." She hesitated only for an instant and then yielded to the joy of incensing him with a statement she had never made even to herself. "You have more cause to fight with Monsieur Osbourne, the American."

"Osbourne! Jallot! How many more?" quivered Lemaitre.

A LOTTERY AND A LOVE AFFAIR

"At least a dozen. I do not name them for fear you might kill them all. Hurry, before you forget. Go! I dismiss you!" She laughed again.

The proprietor came up at that moment.

"My carriage!" ordered Ottilie.

"My bill!" grumbled Lemaitre.

"But your luncheon?" exclaimed the host.

"I do not want it." Lemaitre arose and took out his purse.

"But it is ready!"

While Moreau and the Creole argued, Ottilie turned away toward the terrace entrance, where she all but ran into the arms of Osbourne, who, thus suddenly confronted, doffed his beaver and stammered something about his good luck in coming upon her so unexpectedly. She was conscious of what she had said of the American only a few moments before, and the thought embarrassed her. She returned his salutation and made as though to pass on.

"You are not going?" It was an entreaty rather than a question.

"Yes," she replied; "Monsieur Lemaitre, with whom I was to lunch, has been called away on—on particular business."

Osbourne plucked up his courage. "Then you are at liberty to dine with me!"

His proposition almost stunned her. It was an unheard of thing for a young Creole woman to be seen in a public place attended by a man who

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

was neither relative nor fiancé. Otilie had been brought up to revere this strict observance of the society which she adorned; and there is no doubt that she would never have entertained, even for an instant, the idea of accepting the invitation of the American, had she not seen Lemaitre scowling at her across the terrace. His look aroused her resentment against him and all that he represented; and a desire to affront him, to defy that formal world which had approved her betrothal, made her reckless. Again there was no denying that both Osbourne and the prospective luncheon possessed strong attractions.

The American saw her hesitate, and pressed her to stay.

"But consider the propriety," she gasped momentarily.

"I did not think of that, Mademoiselle."

Otilie became daring. With a smile of bravado she declared, "Then neither shall I."

Lemaitre passed them on his way out and felt chagrined that his malevolent look did not overwhelm Osbourne, who could not resist the impulse to grin at him. The sheriff lacked finesse in such matters. There was a great deal of the youth in him still. He was not above gloating over a triumph, and from Lemaitre's expression he felt assured that he had in some manner scored against the Creole.

Gaily then he called to the little Frenchman.

A LOTTERY AND A LOVE AFFAIR

"Luncheon for two, Moreau! I will leave it to you."

"*Merci!* I have a delicious repast ready to serve," chirped the host, showing them to the table which Otilie had just left. "Monsieur Lemaitre, who ordered it, could not wait."

Osbourne smiled. "Good!" He tucked Otilie into a seat, and took the chair attentively held for him. "There is no hurry," he supplemented, gazing happily across at his companion.

Moreau, wise in such matters, held the service back for fifteen minutes. During that time Otilie and Osbourne were becoming better acquainted.

"No doubt you think it odd that I should be left here by Monsieur Lemaitre." Otilie felt that she should explain.

"Good fortune is never hunch-backed," observed the sheriff, quoting a Creole proverb, meaning that there is nothing odd or unpleasant in a piece of good fortune.

"I must tell you that we have quarreled—finally," continued the girl.

Osbourne's delight showed all too plainly in his face. "I congrat—" He interrupted himself. "I mean—that is too bad."

"You mean nothing of the kind," she glowingly challenged him.

"Certainly not," he confessed and irrelevantly added: "You—you are bewitching!"

"I am happy, Monsieur. You have routed the

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

arch imp of discord."

"And the spirit of good fortune waits upon me, Mademoiselle!"

"Upon us!" she corrected, with a merry trill.

The luncheon arrived, followed by Moreau, who carried with great care a bottle of wine in its cradle. "Here is a bottle! You would not find its equal at any of the other restaurants," he boasted, uncorking it. "And these patties! I made them myself—with the pease. Hah! The chefs of the town do not know the trick of that dressing, if I say so myself!"

Ottilie tasted a pattie and pronounced it delicious.

"*Merci*, Mamzelle!" bowed the host. He filled their glasses. "Taste that, if you please!"

"To your eyes, Mademoiselle!"

"To your health, Monsieur!"

They were merry over it and declared that they had never tasted anything with so fine a bouquet. Moreau was delighted. He ordered the waiter not to forget the salad, and informed his guests that he was preparing for them a wonderful pistache after his own receipt. When they had progressed as far as coffee, Ottilie suddenly exclaimed:

"There is Monsieur Jallot!"

Osbourne looked over his shoulder and saw the Frenchman take a seat at an empty table and beckon to a waiter. "So it is," he remarked in-

A LOTTERY AND A LOVE AFFAIR

differently.

"He is excellent company," she insinuated.

"But," hesitated the American, "I thought—well—that we—you—" The fact was that he did not relish an intruder.

"You thought I might like him to join us?" plagued the girl and replied to her own question: "Certainly! I am reckless to-day! Ask him!"

Osbourne arose reluctantly and crossed over to Jallot, who smiled up at him and said, "Bravo, my friend!" Osbourne did not understand and looked his perplexity. "Mademoiselle Trudeau! The psychological moment! You have recognized it?"

"She asks you to join us!" This very gravely.

"She is gracious! But you—?"

"I obey her orders!" The sheriff smiled a little.

"Her wish is my command, too," said Jallot, rising.

Ottilie beamed at the barber as he approached and insisted that he should sit at her table. She declared that she was much relieved to see him, explaining that Monsieur Lemaitre had sworn to kill him.

"He did not mention it," jested Jallot; "though he passed me just now, scowling like a pirate."

"What's his quarrel with you?" quizzed Osbourne.

Ottilie referred him to "Le Moniteur," and indicated the paragraph. "Monsieur Lemaitre insisted that the malicious thing referred to Mon-

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

sieur Jallot and me!"

"*Tiens!*" cried the barber. "You, too?"

"Is there anyone else, Monsieur?"

"The slipper seems to fit the foot of every woman in New Orleans; and, while all this implies a sort of compliment to me, I find it rather embarrassing."

"It is preposterous!" declared Osbourne, shaking the paper.

"I suppose you will be obliged to kill the editor?" calmly inquired Ottilie.

"I am sorry to say that he has made such a course unnecessary by promising to print an apology," replied Jallot.

"A very good thing, I say," ejaculated the sheriff. "If there had been a duel, I must have arrested you both."

Ottilie protested. "Oh, Monsieur Osbourne! You would not interfere in an affair of honor!"

"Indeed I would. The custom is barbarous!"

"On the contrary," asserted the barber, "dueling forces men to be polite. It has made New Orleans a city of courtly manners."

At that moment he caught sight of Delicado and Villebois, who had just arrived, and were now engaged in earnest conversation with Moreau. Explaining that he had an engagement, Jallot excused himself and joined the Spaniard.

"We are late," said Delicado, wringing the barber's hand cordially. "The host says he will

A LOTTERY AND A LOVE AFFAIR

have to give us a table on the veranda."

"All the better," returned Jallot. "We shall not be disturbed there."

The Spaniard gave him an approving nod and led the way after Moreau, who installed them in the far corner of the lower piazza, which was screened from the terrace by a vine of jasmine.

"Señor Jallot," began Delicado, resting his elbows on the table; "I asked you here to-day merely for the purpose of bettering our acquaintance."

"I am highly complimented, Monsieur!"

The Castilian took from his pocket a case of long cigarettes and passed it to his companions. "I can conceive of nothing so pleasant as the formation of new friendships with kindred spirits," he went on, as he slowly lighted a cigarette; "and I fancy that we have many opinions in common." His smile embraced Villebois, who shifted his position restlessly and began twisting the ring on his finger.

"Yes," laughed the barber; "but I would rather be judged by my tastes than my opinions."

"*Morbleu!*" groaned Villebois; "will you two cease chattering and arrive at the point?"

Jallot affected surprise at this and looked questioningly at Delicado, who shrugged his shoulders and said, "He who runs fast—trips!"

Villebois ignoring this remark, leaned across the table and asked: "I should like to know what you

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

think of the new government, Jallot?"

"In what way?"

"He means," put in Delicado, "to inquire if you do not think it could be improved."

"I mean more than that," asserted Villebois. "Do you not resent the arbitrary manner in which the Americans have set up new laws, which infringe upon your rights?"

"I have never taken any trouble to conceal my resentment against the measures of the new government," replied Jallot; "but it is futile to express it, unless you can suggest a remedy."

"Have you never thought of a remedy?" queried the Castilian.

"No! I have never bothered my head about the matter!"

"Then you have shirked your duty," declared Villebois. "We have been considering a remedy—"

Delicado stopped him with a gesture, and turned to Jallot. "Señor, I am told that your opinion is highly regarded in certain quarters of the city. Therefore, you must be capable of exerting some influence. Now suppose that some patriotic spirits had conceived a remedy for the evils, which you confess the new government inflicts upon Louisiana! Would you be sufficiently interested to join issue with these men in applying that remedy?"

"Possibly!"

"That is sufficient," returned Delicado. "On

A LOTTERY AND A LOVE AFFAIR

Wednesday night of next week will you do me the honor to dine at my lodgings for the purpose of meeting some of my friends with whom we may discuss this question?"

"Gladly, Monsieur!"

"Now we shall proceed to a better acquaintance," said the Spaniard, with a laugh, as Moreau signalled the approach of their luncheon.

CHAPTER XV

THE VEILED FACE OF MYSTERY

As Delicado and his companions began the discussion of Moreau's menu, Antoinette and her foster-father set out for the Tivoli. It was not unusual for them to make such an excursion, but on that particular day she had insisted that he must take the air with her, for his health had suffered under the worry of settling the Spaniard's estate and his failure to secure monetary assistance.

Antoinette was not happy herself. The contumely, which she had heaped upon Jallot, afforded her no satisfaction. In the calm of the night she reviewed again and again that unhappy episode; and, as the hours wore on, a doubt crept into her mind as to whether she had been just in permitting him no opportunity to explain; but her pride was so great that she could not entertain the thought of humbling herself to ask if he could clear himself of the charges made in "Le Moniteur." She felt, that if she were to blame, the breach between them was beyond her mending, and this consideration weighed heavily upon her spirits.

THE VEILED FACE OF MYSTERY

Her own trouble made her more sensitive to the affliction of others. Once she had been blind to the anxiety of old Froebel, but now she noted his melancholy state. With dear concern and entreaty she begged his confidence that morning and finally shook his resolution to keep the visitation of Delicado and its consequences from her. He told her that he was bankrupt, that they must part with the villa, but assured her that his ill fortune would affect her little, since, from the residue of his property, he believed there would be sufficient to provide for their wants.

Hearing all, she was convinced that her foster-father's hopes were greater than his means to realize them; yet, she faced the disheartening prospect with courage. In an instant she had laid out in her mind an array of economies which she proposed to practice for him and for herself. Being, in truth, more anxious for his health than his affairs, she assumed a gaiety of manner, picturing how much happier they would be simply lodged in the town, where she, who had been butterflying all her life, might make a home for him after a fashion all her own.

"We will part with all the servants at once and to-morrow look for lodgings. To-day, we go to the Tivoli for a sail across the lake. The breeze will sweep the cobwebs out of your dear head, so that to-night your mind will be clear to help me plan for the future."

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

Antoinette's cheerfulness gave the old man confidence and relief, because it was on her account that he had been most anxious. Together, then, her arm in his, they walked through the June sunshine to the Tivoli. There they stopped and spoke to Osbourne and Otilie, who were about to leave.

Jallot, from his vantage point on the veranda, saw Antoinette, and from that moment lost all interest in the conversation of his companions. Villebois, noting his indifference, invented an engagement in town and the party broke up. As they made their way across the terrace they were obliged to pass close to where Antoinette stood. She inadvertently looked at Jallot as he drew near and, meeting his glance, turned her face from him only to encounter the blue eyes of Delicado. He stopped short and stared at her, and she, in turn, returned his scrutiny, her eyes widening in fear. In an instant she was all a-tremble. A faintness seized her and she must have fallen had not Jallot sprung forward and caught her arm. He helped her to a chair and called to a garçon for brandy; while Froebel, who seemed almost as agitated as Antoinette, did nothing but wring his hands. Osbourne hurried after the waiter, returning with the brandy himself, and insisted that Antoinette should drain the last drop. Jallot stood aside, waiting, his mind in a whirl of perplexity. Deli-

THE VEILED FACE OF MYSTERY

cado and Villebois passed on through the Tivoli gate.

Antoinette presently looked up and took the hand of Ottilie. "What is the trouble, *chérie*?" asked the Creole girl.

"The face of that—man—I cannot think——" she answered in deep breaths; "it revived some vague—horrid memory of—I—I don't know what—let us go!"

"Perhaps Herr Froebel had better take you home," suggested Osbourne.

"Yes—yes! Let us go!" she agreed in a tremor. Then noting the anxious faces about her, she controlled herself with an effort and, smiling faintly, added: "I am better now."

Jallot, whom she entirely ignored, turned to Osbourne and said, "I will find a conveyance for Mademoiselle." He went out, ordered a volante, and hurried down the Bayou Road after Villebois and Delicado.

They heard his rapid steps behind them and halted that he might overtake them. When he came up, the Spaniard remarked: "We would have waited for you, only we saw that you were engaged."

"It is an extraordinary thing," observed Jallot; "but it seems that the young woman was overcome at the sight of you, Monsieur."

"We have been discussing her peculiar behavior," returned Delicado.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"I told him," jested Villebois, "that his looks frightened her."

"It has quite taken the conceit out of me," joked the Castilian. "I had no idea that I looked so ferocious."

"Possibly Mademoiselle associated you with some distressing event," suggested the barber. "Have you met her before?"

"I am uncertain, Señor. Her face seems familiar to me; yet I cannot place her."

"You may have met her in Paris—she spent the best part of her life there. Does that give you a clue?"

Delicado puzzled for a moment and then shook his head. "It is a mystery to me," he insisted with evident frankness. "You say she is a daughter of Ludwig Froebel?" He put this question to Villebois.

"His adopted daughter!"

"I am all the more bewildered," he slowly replied. "Our minds serve us such tricks! It may be that I merely fancy I have seen the girl before, or that I shall remember her all in a flash."

"After all, it is not our concern," said Jallot.

"Nevertheless, it is of great psychological interest," chuckled Villebois. "A young woman of high character, education and refinement is suddenly confronted by a strange gentleman, who has returned to his native city after an absence of a dozen years; the woman is stunned at the sight of him

THE VEILED FACE OF MYSTERY

and he is unable to explain the phenomenon."

"I promise you I shall cudgel my brains over it and let you know the result," laughed the Spaniard.

By this time they had reached the Rue Royale, where Jallot parted from his companions and went on down the Rue du Maine to his atelier. He was by no means satisfied that Delicado did not recall a previous acquaintance with Antoinette. He felt convinced that her terror was real and had its foundation in some dire circumstance in which the Castilian figured malevolently.

CHAPTER XVI

IT IS EASIER TO FLY THAN TO FIGHT

During Jallot's absence from the atelier that afternoon, Allard called to submit a proof of the retraction which he proposed to publish in the next issue of "Le Moniteur." Poupet, who scorned the editor in his heart because he had preferred to apologize rather than to fight, scarcely deigned to notice him, but went on practicing a gay air upon the violin. Allard was obliged to repeat his inquiry for Jallot before receiving an answer.

"Michié is out," the quadroon succinctly answered, playing away without a pause.

"When will he return?"

"To-night—mebbe!"

"Say to him that I regret my affairs will prevent my returning this evening, but that I may call upon him in the morning."

Poupet continued to fiddle insolently.

"Did you hear?" barked Allard, becoming angry.

"Posseblee!"

EASIER TO FLY THAN TO FIGHT

Thoroughly exasperated, the editor uttered an oath and went out. As he left the court, Gazonac, who was passing on the opposite side of the street, caught sight of him, and with an exclamation of amazement crossed over and demanded:

"How long have you been a patron of that shop, Allard?"

"I have just made my initial visit," answered the editor, not at all pleased at being discovered.

Gazonac became suspicious. "What business can you have with Jallot?"

"It may have been to have my eyebrows curled," retorted Allard.

"You are pleased to jest, Monsieur; but I warn you that if you are up to double-dealing, the joke may be at your expense."

The editor pretended to be injured. "Oh, I shall be perfectly frank with you, my friend. I make no secret of the matter." He took a printed slip from his pocket and offered it to Gazonac. "My visit to Jallot concerned this—a retraction of your paragraph in yesterday's 'Moniteur.' It is to appear next week."

"*Diable!*" exclaimed the Frenchman in amazement and anger. "You mean to publish this?"

"I had it put in type with that purpose," calmly declared Allard.

Gazonac's wrath exploded. "*Nom de chien!* You shall not!"

"I must; otherwise Jallot will kill me." It was

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

a cool statement of a fact. If the editor was perturbed he did not show it.

"And if you do print the apology, I will kill you," retorted Gazonac.

"Is it possible?" Allard was astonished. It had never occurred to him that his friend might go so far as that.

"It is positive; and I shall lose no time in finishing you off." This was not a jest, and the editor fully believed that Gazonac was equal to carrying out his threat.

"That alters the situation," he hastened to rejoin. "I shall not publish the retraction. If I must be killed, I prefer to die at the hands of Jallot next week than to be slain by you this evening." Allard was more philosophic than cowardly.

Gazonac, appeased at having his way, took the editor by the arm, in a friendly fashion, and led him down the street, saying, "You are quite right; and I may be able to save your skin altogether."

"I would appreciate that very much," drawled the Creole.

"What do you say to a sea voyage?"

"I don't understand!"

"I have an interest in 'The Blue Porpoise,' which plies between New Orleans and Pensacola. She is loading now, and expects to go down the river to-morrow. What is to prevent your sailing aboard her?"

EASIER TO FLY THAN TO FIGHT

Allard considered. "But what is to become of 'Le Moniteur?' " he asked.

"It will not be the first time that your valuable periodical has suspended publication; and when you have returned I do not doubt that affairs here will be in such shape that I can protect you from Jallot. Further than that, I shall reimburse you for whatever losses you may sustain by reason of this excursion. What do you say?"

"There is a proverb which runs thus: 'What you lose in the fire you will find in the ashes,' " replied Allard. "I will go. The sea air will do me good, and I shall hope to find on my return that the atmosphere of New Orleans is conducive to my health."

To the satisfaction of both, all arrangements were concluded, and the next morning the editor found himself a lone passenger on "The Blue Porpoise," bound for the Gulf of Mexico.

CHAPTER XVII

SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

Rid of Allard, Gazonac gave his attention to more important matters. His chief concern was to assist in organizing the conspiracy, conceived by Delicado and threatened by Jallot, who now had every prospect of gaining favor with its leaders.

The barber kept Osbourne informed of his progress in winning the confidence of the Spaniard, and assured the sheriff that he expected to possess himself of every detail of the enterprise at the meeting, which was to take place on Wednesday night at Delicado's lodgings.

On the Monday preceding that day, Poupet burst into Jallot's cabinet and announced excitedly that their number had drawn a prize in the lottery.

"Ten tousan' dollah, Michié!" he shouted, intoxicated with joy.

"Are you sure of it?" asked Jallot, somewhat excited himself.

"Sure! Yez, yez!" cried the quadroon. "Ah juz come from de drawin', myse'f. Dey call out

SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

dad noomber! De secon' prize! What yo' tink? Ten tousan' dollah!" He embraced the barber frantically—and apologized.

"I congratulate you, Poupet. Such great luck seems fairly magical. Indeed, I can scarcely realize that you have become in an instant a man of wealth!"

"Michié, yo' air also become de same. De noomber whad Ah draw iz de one Ah give yo' on you' fête-day!"

"But when I accepted it, I never for a moment fancied that it might prove a winning number," protested Jallot. "The money—"

"We divide," interrupted Poupet. "Dad iz five tousan' fo' both. *Sapristi!* Ain'd id won'erful! I ged de check to-morrow or next day. Whad we goin' do wid all dad money?"

"We'll put it in bank," laughed the master, "and decide how to use it at our leisure. For the present I am too much overcome by our newly-arrived opulence to think of anything else."

The fact was that Jallot wished he had not come in for a share of Poupet's windfall. He had a stubborn desire to shape every rung in the ladder of his fortune. By hard work and self-denial he had accumulated a sum almost sufficient to enable him to retire from the management of the atelier and to devote himself to the career he had long dreamed about. Another year's application to the drudgery of his shop would witness his re-

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

demption; and it was even possible that he might not have to wait so long, if his tragedy, which was to be produced within a fortnight, should prove a success.

Now, at first thought, it looked to him as though chance through the medium of Poupet and a lottery had stolen from him the great satisfaction of completing that all-important step in the stairs of his fortune. He nevertheless saw the humor of such a strange disappointment; and further consideration discovered to him that, while he must accept his share of the prize, he might devote the sum to other uses than his own. Thus he could preserve to himself his cherished purpose of being absolutely the forger of his own estate.

In this resolve Jallot showed at once his pride and his vanity—faults but not failings, since they sprang from courage. Like many another intrepid spirit, who has fancied himself all-sufficient unto himself, he was to learn that while destiny may well honor the strong of heart she will not humor them; and he was shortly to be reminded of that old proverb—"what you push away to-day with your foot you will pick up to-morrow with your hand." Then he acknowledged that the wise man is one who accepts the good offices of fate as his rightful portion, earned at one time or another by travail and bloody sweat; that it is all part of some great game in which, no matter how large

SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

he looms up in his own eyes, he is a small thing; a pawn—not a knight—of destiny.

Jallot was by no means unaware of this great force in life, but he over-estimated his own strength. He was all confident in his power to bend the course of master issues to his own ends, while the success he had achieved in the past only served to encourage self-faith for the future. He had planned and wrought with infinite patience and perseverance, and had won for himself, or so it seemed, a fair measure of success. Not being a fatalist, it never occurred to him that he might only be carrying out a rôle allotted him by the Master Dramatist.

He had foreseen much that came, and now that he had planted the seeds of the future, he thought that he must surely know what the harvest would be. It was therefore with confident expectancy that he knocked at the door of No. 11 Rue Toulouse at seven o'clock on that June evening set for the rendezvous of the conspirators. A colored youth in livery admitted him and led the way to a room where he discovered Delicado and Villebois throwing dice.

"Am I early?" asked the barber.

"No! You are on time," laughed his host, "which is more than I expect of the others, who were either born in New Orleans or are thoroughly acclimated."

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"How is it then that I find Villebois ahead of me?"

"I am not ahead of you, Jallot. I am merely twenty-three hours late," chuckled the Creole.

"He was to have dined with me yesterday at this time, and only arrived an hour ago," explained the Spaniard.

"My tardiness cost me about fifty dollars," grinned Villebois, pushing aside the dice box to signify that he would play no more.

"It cost you more than that," said Delicado. "I had an extraordinary human document to lay before you, but I have since concluded to keep it to myself."

"Come now, that's hardly fair," protested the Creole. "As a student of mankind I claim the privilege of sharing your discoveries."

"I have a notion to tell you just enough to provoke your curiosity," mused Delicado. "It might teach you to be punctual in the future."

"Go on! Give me a clue and perhaps I can deduce the rest."

"It is a matter which I fancy will interest Señor Jallot as well as you."

"If it is a leaf from a human document, you may be sure of that," declared the Frenchman.

"It concerns the young woman who was so overcome when she saw me at the Tivoli last week!"

Jallot gave an involuntary exclamation of won-

SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

derment. "So you have recalled something which explains her agitation?"

"I know her!"

"Of course you do," drawled Villebois. "She is Mademoiselle Antoinette Froebel."

"I should have said that I *knew* her," corrected the Castilian.

"When?" quizzed Jallot.

"Over a dozen years ago!"

"She was only a child then!" asserted Villebois.

"Yes! I knew her before she entered Froebel's household; and I may add that her adoption was a surprise to me," admitted Delicado.

"*Mon Dieu*," exclaimed Jallot, concealing his agitation with difficulty; "what a mystery you are making!"

"I thought I should arouse your curiosity," laughed the Spaniard. "Perhaps I shall gratify it later, but you must excuse me now. I hear my guests arriving; and we have weightier matters to discuss."

The new-comers were Gazonac and Lemaitre, who were much chagrined to find that Jallot was one of the party.

"Why is he here?" demanded Gazonac of Delicado.

"Señor Jallot comes at my invitation," was the quiet rejoinder. "I am sure you will find him a valuable recruit."

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders and

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

sneered. "You are at liberty to choose your associates, Monsieur!"

"If anyone here objects to my presence, I will withdraw," announced Jallot, rising and directing a challenging look at Gazonac.

"Do you gentlemen know any reason why Señor Jallot should not become one of us?" inquired Delicado.

"He has made a fool of me with a woman," stormed Lemaitre; "and refused me satisfaction."

"You shall have satisfaction then!" The barber mocked him with a bow.

Lemaitre was astonished and frightened at the same time. "But you said you would not fight with me," he stammered.

"I have changed my mind. Have your seconds call upon Poupet and arrange the details."

"There, you see, it is amicably settled," gibed their host, and turned to greet some tardy guests—three Frenchmen, a Spaniard and an Englishman. The last, who had the face of a well-fed monk and the swagger of a buccaneer, was a patron of Jallot's shop. The others were unknown to him, except the Spaniard, whom he recalled as an associate of Casa Calvo, and presently learned that he was the old Marquis's secretary. His airs were those of a young prince, all indolence and impudence; yet his brow indicated the scholar and the quirks at the corners of his mouth told of the jester. As for the Frenchmen, they

SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

were alike in nationality only. The eldest of the three wore his arm in a sling, and appeared to be the incarnation of suavity and amiability, but when Jallot heard his name he remembered that the man was reckoned the most incorrigible duellist in Louisiana. The youngest, scarcely more than twenty, having a stoical expression and heavily tanned aquiline features, looked more like an Indian than a native of France; while the third, a dapper little man, exceedingly talkative and vain, evidently thought himself a great beau. They were all more or less lavishly caparisoned in rich combinations of light colors, which spoke well for their taste and poorly for the discretion of their tailors, who no doubt would have to whistle for payment.

Jallot listened to their names and gazed at each man with attention as Delicado presented them; and, at last, when he shook the hand of the Englishman, he concluded that he had never seen together such a debonair company of adventurers. Save for the heavy looks of Gazonac, and the petulant visage of Lemaitre, the barber might have fancied himself at some stag soirée, the sole object of which was to dispose of just so much time in the most amusing and delectable fashion that could be contrived.

At a signal from Delicado, the portières at one end of the room parted, and the guests beheld a bijou salon hung with old tapestries and softly

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

illuminated by many-pronged candelabra. The light fell upon a table, sparkling with cut glass and silver, and wreathed about the centre with jasmine. At the direction of their host the guests were soon seated, and Jallot found himself placed between Delicado and Villebois.

A spirit of gaiety ruled the dinner. The barber could scarcely realize that it had any serious purpose. The young Spaniard, who sat across from him on the right of his host, and the Frenchman, who was Villebois's vis-à-vis, proved as engaging and lively companions as he could have desired had he been seeking nothing but pleasure. With good-natured raillery they chided the author upon the failure of his first production of "The Gateway of Dreams." They declared that they had had the misfortune to see the play, and then amended their jibes by complimenting him upon its subsequent success. The Spaniard professed to know the young woman Jallot referred to in some verses as "the moon-flower maid;" and laughingly pointed out that the poet had plagiarized a French writer in his sonnet, "The Crest of Morning."

With exchange of wit, yet never a word of politics the evening wore on. Finally, when the liqueurs were served and the smoke of cigarettes began to veil the tapestried figures on the walls, the host dismissed his servants, and addressed the company:

"Señors, let us proceed to business! Of course,

SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

you all understand the importance of secrecy. At the same time it is necessary that we should secure the co-operation of every man who can be interested in our cause, particularly men of influence."

Gazonac produced a paper. "I have here," he said, "a long list of citizens upon whom we can depend. It means that we can command the co-operation of the entire Creole population of Louisiana."

"You mean the French," interjected Villebois.

"Yes," agreed the young Spaniard, with a smile; "the Creoles spit, but do not fight."

Lemaitre turned belligerently upon the speaker and snapped, "I am a Creole."

"So am I," affirmed Villebois, diplomatically. "But we are different, Lemaitre. What has been said is part truth. It is not the Creole, but the Frenchman, the Spaniard, the Englishman and the Irishman, who are eager to overthrow this barbarian government."

"The Creoles talk angrily enough," contended Gazonac.

"Exactly! They talk against the government," put in the Englishman, in very good French; "but I agree with Villebois that, in a pinch, they will stand by Governor Claiborne."

"There are enough without the Creoles to carry our enterprise through," declared Delicado; and appealed to Jallot, "Do you not think so, Señor?"

"I shall be better able to judge when I know

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

precisely what your design is," he replied; "but I am sure that in Louisiana there are more than enough so-called foreigners, opposed to United States rule, to present a formidable force under arms."

"The most influential men of the old régime are one with us," asserted a Frenchman.

"I bring you word to-night," said the young Spaniard, "and you know whom I represent, that you may rely upon the best of my fellow-countrymen in New Orleans."

"Then it must be our business to secretly enroll every sympathizer in Louisiana."

"And that done—what then?" asked Jallot.

Delicado traced a map of the gulf on the tablecloth, and pointing to the peninsula, said, "I have here a fleet of five vessels and some three thousand troops under arms. As soon as I am assured of the proper support in Louisiana, I shall go to Florida and embark my forces for the Mississippi. We shall land below the forts, and then, simultaneously with the outbreak of our insurrection here, the army will attack the city. We shall take New Orleans by surprise—"

"And make Casa Calvo governor of the independent State of Louisiana!" cried Gazonac.

"To the Independent State of Louisiana!" exclaimed the Englishman, raising his glass.

"To Casa Calvo!" added the young Spaniard.

"To General Delicado!" contended Villebois.

SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

Delicado called for silence. "Pardon, Señors," he prompted; "let us drink to—The Cause!"

"The Cause! The Cause! The Cause!" cheered the company, rising to the toast. Then, as they drained their draughts of Madeira, there was a knock at the door. A servant entered, whispered to Delicado, and, at his direction, went out again.

"My friends," remarked the host, "I have a neglected guest without, one who has no part in our enterprise, but still a guest, bidden here to-night in a forgetful moment. Since he has come I cannot well send him away. Therefore I shall ask him in as soon as we have despatched the business which has brought us together; and I may add that my forgotten visitor may afford you some amusement."

"Then by all means let us have him in," enthused the young Spaniard.

"Perhaps this mysterious person may be a woman," put in Villebois with a chuckle.

"What remains to be done?" asked the Englishman.

"You must choose one of your number as director-in-chief of the enterprise in my absence—I must sail for Florida within two weeks," returned Delicado.

After an animated debate, Gazonac was selected, with Villebois as his lieutenant. The young Spaniard was detailed to collect the necessary funds to carry out the conspiracy and the English-

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

man to assemble arms and ammunition. Delicado calculated that he should be able to land troops in Louisiana no later than the first week in September, and by that time it was agreed that all would be in readiness to raise the insurrection. It was settled, too, that the company should meet again in Delicado's lodgings the night before his departure, and report what progress they had made in the interim.

Their business thus concluded, the host summoned a servant, who came in with a portfolio under his arm and set it down, with quills and ink, before his master.

"Ah!" exclaimed Villebois; "he has sent for an actress to read us some of his own verses!"

"You are mistaken. He has invited a death's-head to our feast," declared the young Spaniard, who, sitting where he could see the door, was the first to take note of the guest, pausing timorously upon the threshold.

In contrast to the brilliant appointments of the room and the gay trappings of the conspirators, the visitor presented a sombre and even piteous appearance. He was clothed in dingy black and his pale and aged face looked haggard above his linen stock. As he entered, leaning a little upon his cane, Jallot started to his feet with an exclamation of amazement, which was echoed by Villebois; while Delicado arose and held out his hand cordially to the newcomer.

SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

"My friends," said the Spaniard to his guests, "I have the honor of presenting to you Señor Ludwig Froebel."

As the bankrupt merchant bowed, he cast an appealing glance at Jallot, who was shocked at the misery revealed in the old man's face; and, as he gazed at him across the table, the thought flashed into his mind that Antoinette must, in some strange fashion, be associated with her foster-father's distress. The barber scrutinized his host as though to fathom what lay beneath the smile of his blue eyes, but they showed no sign save that of amiability. Nevertheless, misgivings would rise in the heart of Jallot, and, remembering that the Spaniard had hailed the coming of Froebel with promises of amusement, he could only think that some sinister motive prompted the summoning of that piteous old man.

With all the attentions of an affable host, Delicado made a place for Froebel at his side, and insisted that his belated guest should drink with the company.

"I drink to Señor Froebel," said the Castilian. "He has been custodian of my estate for twelve years and done well by me."

This announcement was a revelation to Jallot, and only served to mystify him the more.

Delicado opened the portfolio and picked up a paper, saying, "It is extraordinary that in all his accounting, wherein he renders faithful charge to

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

the last picayune, I have found but a single error."

"An error!" exclaimed Froebel in dismay.

The Spaniard smiled. "It is only a matter of one slave!"

"That cannot be," protested the merchant, fearfully.

"It is a girl," continued Delicado, unheeding the interruption. "She was about eight years old when I transferred her to your care—a pretty little octoroon—almost white. She would be nineteen or twenty now. Margot, I called her."

Froebel's agitation was plain to everyone at the table. A look of desperate grief came over his face. His trembling fingers grasped convulsively at the lapels of his coat.

"What became of her?" asked his inquisitor.

"She—is—dead!" he quiveringly replied.

Delicado smiled again in toleration, and remarked, "You are mistaken, Señor. She is not dead. I saw her with you yesterday morning on the Rue Royale; I saw her last Saturday evening at the Tivoli."

"To whom do you refer, Monsieur?" gasped Jallot in a tremor, while the old man, with a groan, hid his face in his hands.

"The young woman whom Señor Froebel does the honor of calling his adopted daughter!"

Those at the table who knew Antoinette were thunderstruck at this declaration. It seemed in-

SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

credible to them that one so lovely as she should have the fatal taint of color in her blood. Jallot was overcome with horror, and at the same time hot with indignation, at the cruel manner in which Delicado had shamed Froebel. As he looked at the old man a sort of sickness seized him. It seemed to him that in that crushed figure he could read confirmation of the Spaniard's indictment.

Seeing the looks of incredulity which his assertion aroused, Delicado added with emphasis, "The girl called Antoinette Froebel is a slave, a yellow slave—my property!"

"You lie, Monsieur!" The challenge came sharply from the lips of the barber.

The host laughed a little, and, pointing to the shrinking form of the German, exclaimed, "Look at him! There's proof! He cannot deny it!"

Jallot entreated Froebel to speak, to deny the charge, but the old man would only shake his head and moan. At last, being commanded, he looked up, showing a tear-stained countenance, and murmured, "I—I cannot!"

"*Dieu!*" Jallot dismayed, shrank back in his chair.

"I'm disappointed," whispered the young Spaniard to the man on his left. "I thought we were to be amused."

"I take it that this is the human document to which you referred a while ago," observed Villebois to Delicado.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"You are quite right," he rejoined, and, addressing his guests in general, added, "I fancied you might be interested in this extraordinary case. When I left New Orleans twelve years ago I placed the girl, of whom I have been speaking, with all my other property, in the custody of Señor Froebel. She was a slave on my plantation, and was entrusted to him with my other chattels. I did not see her again until last Saturday, and, although her face seemed familiar to me, I was not assured of her identity until I encountered her again yesterday morning. Then in an instant I recognized in the woman the slave child I had owned a dozen years ago and own to-day."

"Monsieur Froebel, is this true?" questioned Jallot, with emotion.

"It—it is true!" groaned the German.

Gazonac burst out laughing. "Hah, a yellow girl!"

Froebel looked at him with ineffable pathos, and, addressing himself to the company, said, in a plaintive voice, "A very little girl she was when Herr Delicado left her in my care. Such a pretty child—so white—nobody would think that she the least bit colored was. I took her from the plantation to my house, where my wife—who is dead now five years—learned to love her; and we both thought it a shame that she should grow up like the poor octoroons to be. So we gave her another name, and sent her abroad to be educated

SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

like the lady which she is. Nobody knows this—not even herself—because she was too little then to understand. Some of you know her and have seen what a lovely creature she is. She has become very dear to me. No daughter who is all white could be more.” This simple statement seemed to Jallot the most momentous thing he had ever heard.

“That’s like a German,” ridiculed Lemaitre. “If it wasn’t for the law they would even make wives of the niggers.”

“Which would not be half so bad as what you Creoles make of them,” retorted Jallot. “Many a person of color has a whiter soul than yours, Monsieur!”

“What of that? It is the blood that counts!” championed Gazonac.

The Englishman held out a slender white hand, and, pushing back his cuff, pointed to the vein in his wrist. “Your skin may be white as my linen, yet one drop of black blood makes a stain which nothing can wipe out.”

“What a fuss we have been making over a yellow girl,” chuckled Villebois. “*Nom de Dieu*, I might have married her!”

“And Gazonac, too,” gibed Lemaitre.

Froebel shook a trembling finger at the speaker. “She shall now no one marry!”

“You are quite right,” supplemented Delicado, significantly. “I shall attend to that.”

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"You will not take her away from me?" entreated the old man.

For the first time Jallot detected a cruel glint in the blue eyes of the Castilian, as he replied, "If you want her, buy her of me!"

The barber was tremendously shocked. He could scarcely realize that his host was in earnest. "Buy her? You cannot mean that?" he remonstrated.

"I do!" persisted Delicado.

Froebel wrung his hands, "I cannot buy her," he bemoaned. "To settle with you has me bankrupted."

"If she's for sale, I'll make an offer for her myself," submitted the young Spaniard. "I'm bound I shall have some amusement out of the affair!"

This proposition was received with acclaim. Almost every voice at the table signified a desire to purchase Antoinette. Froebel became desperate. He appealed to Jallot. "Stop them," he cried. "Oh, what will become of her!"

"I can do nothing," responded the barber. "Monsieur Delicado is within his rights."

"I do not want the woman myself," contended the host; "and I do require the money." He arose, hammered on the table with his knuckles, and went on: "Señors, this slave, Antoinette, is for sale. She is known to many of you, so that I shall not speak of her perfections. What am I bid?"

SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

"Now, this is amusing!" beamed the young Spaniard.

Froebel was on his feet. "Oh," he cried, "if someone will only the money lend me, I will for her one thousand dollars give."

"But your security—*hein?*" grinned Villebois.

"Only my word!"

The Creole shook his head. "Not negotiable!"

The company found this retort highly humorous.

"Herr Jallot, my friend, you will accommodate me," begged the German; and then, receiving a negative answer, he sank into his chair again, thoroughly broken.

"I will give one thousand dollars for—what's her name!" announced the young Spaniard.

"Antoinette," volunteered Villebois, and added: "I will make it eleven hundred!"

"Twelve hundred!" put in Gazonac.

One of the Frenchmen laughingly said that he had never seen the girl, but that he would offer thirteen hundred. Then, in a series of bids, supplied in rapid succession, the price mounted to nineteen hundred. At this point Delicado declared Antoinette to be a great bargain, and observed that she would be cheap at five thousand.

Lemaitre had become a bidder. He calculated that if he sold his bay mare he could raise two thousand dollars, which, in that party of adventurers, was an exceedingly large sum. There

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

came a pause then in the offers, and the host, turning to Villebois, chided him for abandoning the field so soon.

"You are mistaken. I was only figuring," retorted the Creole. "She might be a profitable investment. I could dispose of her at public sale. She would bring a high price. I'll bid twenty-one hundred!"

Gazonac was furious. "I have told you," he complained, "that I want the girl. Twenty-two hundred!"

"She's not worth it," prompted Lemaitre.

Villebois agreed with him, and refused to raise his figure. The others, who had no personal interest in Antoinette, could not be urged to add a dollar to Gazonac's bid; and Delicado, imitating the manner of an auctioneer, went on: "I am bid twenty-one hundred dollars for Antoinette by Señor Gazonac. Any more offers?" He looked around the table, and finding no encouragement, cried, "Going, going—"

"Twenty-five hundred!" This bid came unexpectedly from Jallot, who all the time had kept silent.

Froebel started up with a cry of gratitude. "You will buy her in for me!"

"Or for himself," jeered Lemaitre.

The barber gave no indication of having heard either of these remarks. He was thinking how strange a thing it was to be bidding for the person

SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

of Antoinette; and pictured to himself how horrifying it would be to her. It was plain to him now why she had been overcome at the sight of Delicado. Although she had not realized who he was or what he had been to her, he was evidently associated in her mind with acts of cruelty. The fancy that the Spaniard might have inflicted some brutality upon Antoinette, the child, filled Jallot with fury; and he was resolved to exhaust every means to save her from any further shame or degradation. He was therefore quick to respond when Gazonac cried, "Twenty-six hundred!"

"Twenty-seven hundred," he submitted.

"Bravo," laughingly enthused Villebois. "He means to start another asylum. Jallot, if I subscribe ten dollars, will you place me on the board of managers?"

"I have bid twenty-six hundred," said Jallot; "and I ask your word of honor, gentlemen, to keep this transaction a secret one."

"You have not bought her yet," exclaimed Gazonac, ominously.

"Nor you!" retorted the barber; and, appealing to the others, asked if they would give him their pledges as he had requested.

"Why should we?" inquired the young Spaniard.

"For the same reason that I entreat your promise not to spread the report that the young woman is an octoroon: to preserve her from the humility

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

which such a disclosure would inflict upon her."

"I told you Jallot was benevolent!" jested Villebois.

"He is mercenary!" declared Lemaitre. "If it became known that he maintained a handsome yellow girl, it would injure his trade."

It was finally agreed that, should Jallot succeed in outbidding Gazonac, the entire company were pledged to withhold the word that Antoinette was an octoroon, and to keep secret the purchase. Much to Jallot's wonder it was Delicado who gave him strongest support in this contention.

Gazonac, grown impatient at the delay, advanced his offer to three thousand, thinking to put the price above Jallot's means; and he was therefore greatly chagrined when the barber increased his bid by a thousand.

"Five thousand!" persisted Gazonac.

"Magnificent," said Delicado; "but can you command that sum?"

This question raised a general laugh; but Gazonac unperturbed rejoined that he could raise the money on the morrow by mortgaging his house.

"Antoinette is now worth her weight in real estate!" sniggered Villebois.

"I am bid five thousand," announced Delicado, looking at Jallot, who promptly made a tender of six thousand.

"Ridiculous!" shouted Gazonac. "A barber



"I HAVE BOUGHT THE WOMAN I LOVE"

SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

with six thousand dollars!"

"Ridiculous, but true. I have five thousand on deposit, and my bankers will loan me two more on my shop—then—"

"But that is your all!" declared his opponent. "I bid eight thousand! Beat that!"

The barber demurred and at last appealed to Villebois, asking an advance of five thousand dollars. "On what security?" questioned the Creole.

"My next play!"

"That is humorous," tittered the young Spaniard, while Villebois shook his head, saying that a play-manuscript was not negotiable paper.

The host dipped a pen in the ink and remarked, "I may as well make out a bill of sale to Señor Gazonac."

"Wait!" commanded Jallot.

Gazonac arose in remonstrance. "But I have offered eight thousand!"

"And I bid ten!" returned Jallot, suavely.

"I protest!" stormed Gazonac. "He cannot make good his bid."

"Ten thousand dollars!" repeated the barber. As he spoke he took a cheque from his pocket and flung it down on the table.

Delicado examined it. "A lottery cheque for ten thousand dollars," he announced.

"Oh, Herr Jallot!" cried Froebel in ecstasy.

The table was in a roar with laughter and congratulations for Jallot. Only Lemaitre and

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

Gazonac felt discomfited.

"It is certified—endorsed to me," said the barber.

Delicado seized his pen again, and with a flourish called upon Gazonac for a bid. "You are not going to lose the prize?" he questioned.

"*Milles cochons!* He can have her!" was the savage rejoinder.

"Antoinette, sold to Señor Jallot, for ten thousand dollars!" exclaimed the host, and making out a bill of sale, gave it to the highest bidder.

The young Spaniard sprang to his feet, raised his glass and cried, "I call for a standing toast to the man who has bought Antoinette!"

Jallot, who had risen to receive the bill from Delicado, stepped aside from the table, as the company pledged his health. With ineffable anguish he crushed the paper in his hands, thinking, "I have bought the woman I love."

CHAPTER XVIII

HOPE HOLDS COUNCIL WITH DESPAIR

The woman he loved! That was how Jallot thought of Antoinette, realizing that he owned her even as he did the coat upon his back. His vision of the girl was not tinged with remembrance of her scorn for him. He saw her a proud, adorable creature, moving with graceful, imperious tread through the measures of a dance and smiling, with fond friendliness, upon the man who had bought her.

The man who had bought her! Jallot thought of himself with a shudder. He looked down in horror at the bit of paper, which gave him absolute power over her. He felt that he had done her a terrible wrong beyond repair, that he had committed a sacrilege.

He had been under a terrific emotional strain. Momentarily he lost the power properly to marshal his thoughts. He charged the desperate depression he suffered to abhorrence of himself for becoming the owner of Antoinette. There was chaos in his mind; anguish in his heart.

He was numbly conscious of a confusion of

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

voices, and even distinguished his name shouted above the seeming turmoil of the place. The company at Delicado's table appeared small, far-away and receding, as figures do when seen through an inverted opera glass.

An irresistible desire came over him to escape from the stress and rant about him. He yielded to it, and without remembering how he had effected his leave, presently found himself in the street. The night air and a brisk walk to the atelier cleared his head; and the events of the evening paraded in order through his mind, recovering their true values.

Although it was late, a light from his window shone across the court. Greatly to his comfort he discovered that Osbourne, anxious to learn the result of the meeting, was awaiting his return.

Jallot had but briefly acquainted him with the night's amazing developments, when they were surprised by Froebel, who, in a hysteria of hope and despair, had come to the shop to learn what fate was designed for Antoinette.

The old man's spirit was completely broken. On the verge of a collapse, he gratefully accepted the chair placed for him near the cabinet window, and drank off the glass of sherry which the barber pressed upon him.

"I am very glad you came," said Jallot. "We have much to say to each other and you may talk freely before Monsieur Osbourne, whom I have

HOPE HOLDS COUNCIL

taken into my confidence. First of all, please tell me whatever you may know of Mademoiselle Antoinette's history prior to the day she fell into your hands."

By this time Froebel had grown calm. "I only know that she a slave was on the plantation of Herr Delicado," he replied; "and that she by the name of Margot went."

"You took it for granted that she was a person of color?"

"Yes! How could she a slave be if she were not?" The old man apparently had no doubt that Antoinette's blood was tainted.

"That is precisely what I said," interposed Osbourne.

Jallot made a gesture of impatience. "There have been white slaves before now. I believe that Mademoiselle is as white as any of us."

"I wish I of that sure could be," sighed Froebel.

They were silent for a little while. Then Jallot addressed the German again. "Mademoiselle Antoinette must be kept in ignorance of the charge that she is an octoroon, and the fact that I have bought her. Such news would make her ill or—worse!"

Froebel nodded his head gravely. "You are right, *Mein Herr*. She shall the truth not learn from me." After another pause, he inquired with sudden anxiety, "Why have you her bought?"

There was a tone of surprise in Jallot's re-

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

joinder. "What do you suppose, but to keep her safe from those libertines!" His gray eyes softened, an expression of infinite tenderness overspread his face, as he declared with simplicity, "I love Mademoiselle Antoinette."

"You love her, so you say," returned the merchant, sceptically; "but that may be so bad for her as—"

"I mean to marry her!" There was no doubting Jallot's sincerity. Osbourne, looking on with interest, felt the power of purpose which his friend put into those few words. For his part, the old man was astounded. It had not occurred to him that this might be a solution of the sad problem which perplexed him. He rose unsteadily from his chair and held out his hand to the barber with an action which showed his gratitude far better than he could have spoken it. "So you will marry her!" His voice quavered. It seemed to him as though a weight of woe were lifted from his shoulders.

"If she will consent!"

"She must!" Froebel had the German idea of absolute obedience to parental command.

"That is just the point. It is not she who must consent; it is I who must win her; and I shall brook no interference in my favor. I have a clear field now—all I ask."

"But she her lessons has stopped," complained the old man; "though she would not tell me why."

HOPE HOLDS COUNCIL

Now that I am bankrupted, she cannot then resume, and because of the difficulties which this settlement has brought to me, she would not permit me any arrangements to make so that you could teach her once more."

Jallot considered the situation for a few minutes. While he missed Antoinette's dear presence more keenly than he would then acknowledge, he was more concerned in setting himself right in her eyes. He possessed an all too vivid remembrance of the scorn and contempt with which she had looked upon him that unhappy morning when she bade him send her his bill. Should the next issue of "Le Moniteur" contain, as he confidently expected, the apology for that insidious paragraph, he felt that he might reasonably hope for a renewal of their friendly relations, if not as master and pupil, then in some other fashion which he must devise. In which case he meant to find the way to win her. Meanwhile he proposed to assist with all his might in the rehabilitation of Froebel's broken fortune. To this end he spoke.

"You must leave to me the problem of Mademoiselle's affections," he began. "But there is another matter of almost equal importance to be adjusted."

"What is that?" quizzed the merchant.

"Your business! You say that you are a bank-

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

rupt. Do you mean that you are in heavy debt, or that your credit is exhausted?"

"I have myself impoverished to satisfy Delicado. I have nothing left but a small income from a warehouse property which on the levee is. I owe some little money here and there. That is all; but because of my many losses, which the sea from me has taken, the bankers think that I have no luck left, so I can get no credit."

"Then you are not a bankrupt," declared Osbourne.

"Certainly not!" asserted Jallot, and he asked Froebel to tell them exactly how he came to be placed in such a position.

"First the pirates cause me two ships to lose; then the storm another; then Delicado all the rest. *Gott in Himmel!* Before twelve years ago, he in my hands his estate placed of plantation and slaves consisting. He goes away and returns not. I take good care of the estate. I put the money in bank—for ten years. Then I hear that he is dead. He have not heirs. I think all that was his is mine. I mortgage the estate to build more ships. I invest the money in merchandise. Then the sea all that takes from me. After twelve years returns the Spaniard. I am obliged that estate to settle. I am exhausted in my means to do so."

"You are not half so badly off as you might be," encouraged Osbourne. "The difficulty is to re-establish your credit."

HOPE HOLDS COUNCIL

"Which can be done if you begin in a small way." Jallot then went on to explain a plan, which rapidly formed itself in his mind. He acquainted them with the fact that he had been obliged to expend the entire lottery prize to keep Antoinette from falling into the hands of Gazonac, and that one-half of that sum belonged to Poupet, whom he knew, however, would not press for payment, but willingly accept his personal note for the debt. He had five thousand dollars in bank, which he was ready to invest in the restoration of Froebel's business, and he had no doubt that Osbourne would be able to raise an equal sum, bringing the total up to ten thousand, sufficient to give the merchant a basis for further credit. The sheriff volunteered to supply the necessary funds, and it was settled that on the next day the three partners should meet and sign the papers, with the understanding that the house should be conducted, as in the past, under the name of L. Froebel.

The old German wept with happiness. "We shall have enough," he exclaimed, "to charter a new ship—a small one which shall so far go only as Pensacola. That is how we begin! Oh, Herr Jallot, you the best man in the world are; also Herr Osbourne! You have new life into this old frame put; and I could almost happy be, except for Antoinette."

"It must come right," affirmed Jallot. "I shall leave nothing undone to learn who her parents

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

were. We must and shall prove her white."

"You are undertaking an impossible task, I fear," put in Osbourne.

"Impossible, if you begin with that idea," exclaimed the barber, with warmth. "I have no patience with those who say a thing cannot be done. The least you can do is to fail; but I wager you that there shall be no failure in this case."

Froebel arose to go, his face beaming with gratitude and hope. "I—I—I—can nothing say," he faltered, quite overcome; and, wringing the hands of his new partners, wished them good night.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FIREFLY MAKES LIGHT FOR HIS OWN SOUL

Old Froebel had come to the Atelier Jallot with halting step, but left it with buoyant tread. Only for the necessity of picking his way through the dark, his eyes must have raised themselves from the stepping stones to the stars; but once he stopped to look up where the Southern Cross hung in splendor from the vast nave of the night. In that bright constellation he found a symbol of brave hope for himself and began to wonder how many millions of people might be fixing their eyes upon it that very moment in gladness or in sorrow.

Even as he wondered thus, Antoinette sat on her balcony, keeping a long vigil, speculating with fear upon the cause of her foster-father's prolonged absence, and looking down upon the strange and deserted Rue Bienville. For two days now they had occupied these, their new lodgings, and, while she made a pretence of being pleased at the change from the stately villa—with tapestried rooms, flowered terraces and magnolia scented walks—she mourned its loss in secret.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

She had faced the prospect of reduced circumstances with courage, and even now met the reality bravely, upbraiding herself for yielding momentarily to the depressing influences of her new environment. Her nature demanded charming surroundings, dainty and beautiful things and sovereign-like service. All that she cherished she had been obliged to relinquish, and those fragments of richness and refinement which she had brought to her humble domicile only became pitiful reminders of what she had lost.

With foreboding, the girl had seen Froebel go out that night, and in answer to her solicitous entreaty, he had promised an early return. As the hours wore on, her apprehension grew, and she sat there alone on the balcony anxiously listening for the familiar stump of the old man's cane on the banquette.

It came at last, and her quick ears were prompt to detect its enlivened tattoo. She was down at the street door long before he had drawn his key, and as he stepped across the threshold, she welcomed him there with pretty affection, chiding him for inflicting her with a troubled night. Where had he been? What had happened? Why had he made such a mystery about his going? What had kept him so late? Did his cheerfulness mean that he had good news? Had the sea unexpectedly given up the lost ship? She hurled a volley of questions at him as they ascended the

LIGHT FOR HIS OWN SOUL

stair; and not until they were seated together in the little room with the balcony—a one-time shabby little room, which her magical touch had turned into a dainty boudoir—did she take breath and give him chance to make reply.

He was cheerful and the warmth of her greeting gladdened his heart. At the same time, as he looked into that lovely face, with its delicate, patrician features, a feeling of unutterable sadness swept over him, for he was thinking of the hideous charge which stood against her blood; but he thought, too, of Jallot's implicit belief that she was white, and found new faith in that opinion as he gazed upon the ivory lustre of her skin.

"You should be by this time in bed," he teased, noting the shadows under her eyes.

"I shall go as soon as you have told me of your adventure, and not until then," she declared. "Begin!"

"I have secured new capital. My business is to be re-established," he announced with a quaint flourish.

Antoinette was overjoyed. She expressed her happiness by embracing him, and confessed that she had been fearful lest good fortune might never again be their portion. How wonderful it seemed that at the very moment when the future had looked most dark to her, it should suddenly be illuminated with hope! How foolish she had been to doubt the beneficence of Providence!

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

There was nothing so terrible as poverty! How miraculously they had escaped its sinister shadow! That happiness, which is the sun of the soul, glowed in the face of Antoinette. She imparted it to Froebel, for joy is a contagious thing.

He laughingly warned her that they had not found immediate affluence; that for some time they must exercise the economy she had so valiantly undertaken; but assured her that, from a modest beginning—practicing prudence, minimizing risk and being content with small profits at first—he had every reason to believe that with the growing trade of the port they must eventually recover every loss. Her spirits were a little dashed by this, for she anticipated no delay in returning to their former mode of living, but she veiled her disappointment, trying to be philosophical about the necessity of keeping house in mere lodgings, and resigning herself to the curtailing of expenditures in the way of dress and entertainment. After all, she thought, it might be much worse; and the fact that her foster-father looked so cheerfully upon the prospect of mending his fortune, did something to atone for the distress she suffered.

She went to bed much easier in mind than she had been for many a night, and in the morning awoke as cheerily as the sunbeams which played across her counterpane. At the simple breakfast, prepared by Caresse, and set out on a small table by the open window through which the fresh air

LIGHT FOR HIS OWN SOUL

of the day came in fragrant breaths, Antoinette resumed her interrogation of Froebel, and learned, to her chagrin, that Jallot was the architect and financier of the old man's newly reared hopes. Realizing this, Antoinette's impulse was to cry out a protest, to insist that her guardian should accept no assistance from the man whom she believed to have boasted of a conquest over her; but as she looked across the table into the rejuvenated face of the old German, she controlled herself, thinking how miserable he would be if he were not permitted to seize the one, and apparently the only, means he had to redeem his life from failure.

Accordingly she let him go about the business of preparing the partnership papers, without a hint of what was in her mind, where churned the contending forces of pride and affection. Finally, after an hour or more of indecision, pride ruled her will, and, calling Caresse to accompany her, she set out for the atelier with the purpose of repudiating the bargain Jallot had made with the merchant.

Not until she reached the court did her purpose falter. Then she experienced a moment of hesitation—a doubt as to the virtue of her course—an uncertainty which must have restrained her intention had it pressed upon her half an hour before; but now that she had gone so far, she would not turn back. She sent Caresse ahead to inquire

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

if Jallot could be seen, and awaited the answer in trepidation.

Jallot, filled with expectancy and some concern, came to the door himself, and entreated Antoinette to enter. The atelier was deserted save for Poupet, who vanished at a sign from his master; and the girl, looking about at the familiar appointments, to avoid the questioning glances of Jallot, felt strangely touched and incompetent to play the part she had chosen in the rashness of her pride. But there was the man, holding a chair for her and politely waiting some word of her business. How should she begin? Not by taking a seat as though she had come for a friendly chat! She would stand. That would indicate that she meant her visit to be brief. She would speak quickly and go. Without a preface she began: "I cannot permit Herr Froebel to accept any assistance whatever from you, Monsieur, although I appreciate your kindness."

For an instant Jallot was puzzled. Then he comprehended her motive and at the same time understood that she had come in spite of her pride, and on account of it. Experience had taught him that under such circumstances all argument was futile; nevertheless he did not propose that her determination should interfere with the prospects of Froebel. While thinking this, he was also entertaining a scheme to circumvent her objection.

LIGHT FOR HIS OWN SOUL

"Very well, Mademoiselle," he rejoined, "I shall withdraw from the partnership."

His ready acceptance of her demand came as a surprise. She had expected him to make some protest. In fact she was rather disappointed that he did not. At once she thanked him, and was about to go, when it flashed upon her that he might be deceiving her. She turned back. "I mean precisely what I said, Monsieur. Herr Froebel cannot accept your assistance directly or indirectly."

"Surely, Mademoiselle, you cannot object to a partnership with Monsieur Osbourne, since he is your father's friend as well as mine," ventured Jallot.

Curiously enough she had laid her finger upon the very plan which Jallot had just devised. "I should object for the reason that you would no doubt withdraw in person, but leave your money in the partnership under Monsieur Osbourne's name."

Jallot could scarcely forbear a smile at this display of acumen. "Oh," said he, "I see you are determined that I shall not enjoy the privilege of investing my money in a profitable enterprise."

She resented the light manner in which he couched this confession of his purpose, yet was relieved to learn that he was dealing frankly with her. "If you will give me your word that you will in no way assist Herr Froebel, I shall with-

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

draw my objection to Monsieur Osbourne," she announced.

While he considered how he should answer, some one knocked at the atelier door. "I do not wish to go, Monsieur, without your reply," said Antoinette; "and that may be Herr Froebel."

"And I, Mademoiselle, must have a moment to reflect," he returned. "Perhaps you will be patient enough to step behind the screen with your maid, until I have dismissed my visitor. I promise not to detain you long."

Antoinette nodded her consent and joined her *bonne* behind the great screen, which stood back of the barber chair. Jallot then went to the door and admitted Gazonac, who peremptorily inquired whether Delicado had been at the shop that morning. The barber told him that the Spaniard had not yet put in an appearance; whereupon the conspirator insisted upon waiting, and suggested that Jallot might improve the time by shaving him.

At first Jallot was inclined to excuse himself, with the pretext of an engagement, but on second thought it occurred to him that an opportunity presented itself to set him right with Antoinette. He waved Gazonac to the barber chair, and set about the business of lathering him.

"You have your hands full these days, Monsieur," said Jallot.

"Oh, yes! And you, too, I suppose—particularly since you came into possession of—"

LIGHT FOR HIS OWN SOUL

As though by accident the barber lathered his customer across the mouth, apologized and tactfully guided the conversation from such dangerous ground to the subject of the drama.

"You are to have a tragedy produced next week at the Théâtre Saint Pierre, I believe," gossiped Gazonac.

"Yes; and I am promised an excellent cast."

Antoinette was growing impatient. She thought Jallot was treating her abominably.

"Where do you find the inspiration for your plots?" quizzed the customer.

"In life! I found an excellent plot in the last issue of 'Le Moniteur.'"

"Indeed!"

"It contained a paragraph about a barber and a lady. Did you read it, Monsieur?"

Antoinette instantly became interested.

"You must have noted the paragraph," Jallot humorously continued; "because it referred to me."

"Did it mention your name?"

"No, but it was clearly meant for me. Do you recall it?"

"I can't say that I do."

The barber was delicately shaving Gazonac's chin. "Perhaps you have not tried sufficiently," he suggested.

"Why should I?" The tone of this retort was belligerent.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"Because I wish you to!"

Gazonac became aware that the razor's edge was pressing against his throat. "Have a care," he cautioned, nervously; "you will cut me."

Without changing the position of his blade, the tonsor rejoined, "I hope not! Do you recall the paragraph?"

"I have some vague remembrance of it," admitted the other.

"Good! Refresh your memory further, and recall who wrote it!"

Antoinette was now all excitement. She began to understand the meaning of the little drama, and to realize that Jallot was producing it for her benefit.

"How should I know that?" grumbled Gazonac.

"This razor is very sharp and my hand trembles!"

"I fancy the editor wrote it himself."

Jallot smiled. "How droll you are! Fancy that you wrote it yourself!"

"Suppose I did?" Notwithstanding that he could feel the touch of steel at his throat, Gazonac dared be defiant.

"I have supposed that!"

"Well?"

"Monsieur Gazonac, confession is good for the soul; also for the throat when the razor is keen."

"Oh, you think I wrote it?" His affectation of surprise was admirable.

LIGHT FOR HIS OWN SOUL

"I know you did."

"Then why say more about it—particularly as you have bought—?"

"Merely a whim of mine," interrupted Jallot quickly, and, pressing his customer's windpipe a little, added, "I hope I am not hurting you."

Gazonac became conciliatory. "What do you want?"

"The truth!" was the succinct reply.

"If I refuse?"

"They say that this is an excellent shop in which to get your throat cut," Jallot remarked with unction. "Does the edge annoy you?"

"You have cut me," remonstrated Gazonac, angrily.

"A mere scratch! Yet—keep still, Monsieur, or—!" It was an incomplete, but ominous threat.

"*Morbleu!*" gasped the victim; "I wrote it. Now, if you have finished, let me up!"

The barber held him in the chair. "One moment! You have not said that the paragraph was a lie!"

"Why should I say that?" It was more of a protest than a question.

"Simply that I may enjoy the novelty of hearing you speak the truth."

"Take your razor from my throat!" stormed Gazonac.

"Patience, and the truth, Monsieur!"

"It—was—a—lie!"

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"A thousand thanks," smiled Jallot, laying aside his razor.

Gazonac threw off the apron and was about to leap up, when the tonsor flung an arm about his neck and forced him back into the chair. "Permit me to complete your toilette!" He doused his customer's face with cologne. "That for *lagniappe*!"

"*Sacré bleu!* Pig of a barber—!"

Jallot smothered him with a towel. "I believe in doing all things thoroughly! There!" He released his victim. "Powder?"

"No!" thundered the conspirator, as he bounded from the chair.

"Your hat!" Jallot tendered him the beaver with a bow.

"You have outraged me; and you shall have double payment—more than you desire!" Gazonac flung down a coin and went, his coat-tails standing out straight behind him. He banged the door after him, and the barber, bolting it, turned to see Antoinette, who now approached him, holding out her hand contritely.

"Monsieur" she entreated; "forgive me."

He looked at her with a whimsical expression, as he took her hand. "With all my heart, *Made-moiselle*."

"You are generous!"

"I shall be repaid, if you only smile at me again."

LIGHT FOR HIS OWN SOUL

She smiled divinely at him. For the first time since their estrangement they were happy. Again, like friends, they sat together in the window, which opened on the garden where the June roses, full-blown and fragrant, bowed to them handsomely.

"Mademoiselle, your smile drives light into the dark corners of my heart," beamed Jallot. "It is like the flash of a firefly in the night."

"The firefly makes light for his own soul, Monsieur," admonished Antoinette.

"You make light for mine!"

"And you make light for—others. You have forgiven me, so now I dare entreat you to forget all that I said so unkindly this morning, and to continue in your good purpose to assist Herr Froebel. Believe me, I shall feel much beholden to you."

"Oh, Mademoiselle, you must not feel like that! It is all a matter of business. I am sure that it will turn out to be an excellent investment."

Neither spoke then for a little time. Jallot was wondering how he might contrive to renew their meetings without recourse to the old and the now seemingly impossible excuse of dancing lessons.

"You have not asked for Jérôme," he presently reproached, and went on to tell her that the boy spent all day at the monastery where the good fathers concerned themselves with his education;

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

and, when evening came, sent him back to the atelier. "He often asks for you, Mademoiselle," continued Jallot, "and I wish you might come sometime to see him."

Antoinette promised that she would, and turned the conversation to the subject of Jallot's work. She wished most to know something of the play, which she heard was to have its *première* the next week. More than willingly he confided to her those ideas upon which he based his hope for its success; and though this communion was dear to him, the happiness of the hour was tempered with sadness, because again and again the thought occurred to him, with increasing piteousness, that she stood within the prospect of a revelation, which would crush her with its ignominy. He could fancy nothing so overwhelmingly humiliating to her as the belief that she was an octoroon; and he decided that he would lose no time in seeking knowledge of her early life, and that his first step would be to catechize Delicado.

While these sombre thoughts intruded, he maintained a cheerful countenance, and their gossiping ran on until a rap at the door signalled another visitor. Fearing that it might be Froebel, Jallot showed Antoinette and Caresse out through the garden door. There he took the girl's hand again, pressed it tenderly, and let it go with reluctance. Though no word passed between them,

LIGHT FOR HIS OWN SOUL

both understood that the friends of yesterday had become something more than friends to-day.

CHAPTER XX

THE FOLLY OF BEING IMPETUOUS

Osbourne, not Froebel, hastened Antoinette's departure. The sheriff was anxious to confer with Jallot, and to decide what course they should take to overthrow the conspiracy. They had determined not to acquaint Governor Claiborne with the enterprise until they were better informed; and still Jallot counselled secrecy, holding that any premature movement might put to flight those who had so far taken no active part in the organization, and against whom he had yet to secure proof of complicity.

"I have been thinking," said the American, as they consulted together in Jallot's cabinet, "that we must arrest Delicado before he starts for Florida."

"He sails on the seventh of July. We will wait until the night of his departure, when the conspirators propose to assemble for conference. By that time I hope to have the names of the great ones concerned. All the arrests must be made that night simultaneously. You can notify the governor a few days in advance, so that he will

THE FOLLY OF BEING IMPETUOUS

be prepared to lend us whatever assistance we may require. Do you agree?" asked the barber, in conclusion.

"Of course! I could not possibly have regulated the affair as well as you have. I leave its direction entirely in your hands," returned Osbourne, with an air of satisfaction.

"That's settled; but we have another matter to take up this morning," went on Jallot. "Our partnership with Froebel. He should be here now. I hope he will not keep us waiting, because I have a rehearsal of 'The Judgment' at the theatre this afternoon."

He opened the door into the atelier, and saw the merchant sitting patiently by the window with a notary.

"I did not wish to disturb you," explained the German, as Jallot showed them into the cabinet, where they signed the partnership papers; and the notary after affixing his seal, left them to discuss their business.

"We are very fortunate," began Froebel. "Only this morning I discovered an unchartered bark, which the name of 'Olympe' has. It will do very well to trade between New Orleans and Pensacola. I am to see her owner this afternoon, and if you will your permission give, I will a bargain conclude with him at once."

"Do not consult us," laughed Jallot. "We know nothing about business."

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"Do whatever you think best," supplemented Osbourne; "we leave the management of the concern to you."

Accordingly, on that very afternoon, Froebel chartered the "Olympe," and three days later she sailed on her initial voyage, clearing for the house of L. Froebel.

In the meantime Jallot's days were crowded with activity. He was obliged to attend frequent rehearsals of his tragedy, which was to be presented on the following Monday night, and although this took much of his time, he felt well repaid, as the cast promised to give "The Judgment" an excellent performance. Then the affair of the slander in "Le Moniteur" demanded his attention. Saturday came and still the paper was not published, and while he had satisfied Antoinette that the accusation was untrue, nevertheless the barber knew that others had seen the paragraph and associated it with him; besides he meant that Allard should keep his word.

On his way to visit the editor, Jallot fell in with Osbourne, who, hearing of the errand, insisted upon accompanying him. They found the office of "Le Moniteur" deserted, save for an indifferent compositor, who told them that Allard had left the city for a long voyage.

"That is unfortunate," said Jallot; "we shall have to publish the paper without him."

Osbourne laughed. The idea pleased him.

THE FOLLY OF BEING IMPETUOUS

"Impossible, Monsieur," yawned the compositor. "You cannot make a paper without an editor, and even if you had one, there is nobody to ink the press."

"Nothing is impossible that must be done," declared the barber. "If Monsieur Allard's health has compelled him to take a vacation, I his friend, will see that his interests do not suffer in his absence. Will you please stir yourself?"

"I am the compositor of the paper," drawled that individual; "you need not expect me to do anything but set up the type, and, as there is nothing to be composed, there is no necessity of stirring myself."

"I should not think of asking you to undertake any work outside of your profession," retorted Jallot. "Monsieur Osbourne and I shall both edit and print the paper. All you have to do is to set it up; and we will double your wage. You shall have to work, though, as you have probably never worked before, for we propose to issue 'Le Moniteur' to-night."

The compositor grinned. "You will never do that," he insisted.

"We shall see," exclaimed Jallot. He began by taking off his coat, and Osbourne followed his example. To lighten their labors they decided to use whatever matter they could find in type, and, much to their relief, discovered a sufficient number of items to fill more than a page. Osbourne

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

assembled these, ready for the press, while Jallot sat down to write the retraction in a form that would have made the editor gasp with dismay. In a few minutes it was in the hands of the compositor, who, with half his pay in his pocket, waked from his lethargy and went cheerfully to work.

The amateur editors held a conference, and, cudgelling their brains, were soon busily engaged in scribbling off such news and gossip as had lately come to their notice. For a while they worked along merrily, but as the hours wore on and they had scarcely written one-half the copy they required, Osbourne flung aside his pen in despair.

"I've put down every bit of gossip I know—from the announcements of your tragedy and the bal masqué at the Tivoli, to the departure of 'The Olympe' and the funeral of Old De Neville; not to mention all the jests I have ever heard, and some few"—laughing with assumed conceit—"which I hope will be heard again. I declare that I can think of nothing else, and if I had another idea I am too exhausted to 'make use of it.'" He leaned back in his chair and mopped his forehead.

Jallot kept on writing, nor did he pause until he heard the compositor say that he had more than enough copy to keep him continuously busy for two days. "Then we must have assistance," said the barber. "Are there no other men of your profession to be found in the city?"

THE FOLLY OF BEING IMPETUOUS

"There's a printer's shop in the Rue Chartres, just this side of the Place d'Armes. You might find one there," suggested the compositor.

On this hint, Osbourne agreed to act, and, promising that he would return with the entire printing establishment under his arm, went out. While he was gone, Jallot, driving away at his work, and presenting only the top of his head to the counter, suddenly became conscious of a voice, saying, "Pardon me, Monsieur; are you the editor?"

He looked up into the face of Antoinette. Their astonishment was mutual. Even the stoical Caresse, who stood at Mademoiselle's elbow, was surprised to see Jallot in this new rôle. Antoinette broke the silence with a little laugh, and the craftsman, with a word of apology, reached for his coat.

"Pray do not disturb yourself," besought the young woman. "I am going immediately. I—I merely came to—to see the editor."

"I am the editor, for the time being," smiled Jallot; "and whatever business you may have had with Monsieur Allard you may safely trust to me."

"Will you tell me, Monsieur, is there anything which you cannot do?" she inquired whimsically, thinking to divert his attention from any questioning as to the purpose of her visit.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"There are a great many things I haven't tried," he replied.

"I don't suppose there is anything you would not undertake!"

"Possibly not, if I had sufficient reason. Just now, Monsieur Allard, the editor and proprietor of 'Le Moniteur,' is away; and you find me obliged to assume his duties in order that there may be no delay in the retraction of a canard which reflected upon my character. You no doubt recall the paragraph to which I refer."

Her blush showed him that she did, and for want of something else to say she remarked, "I do not know Monsieur Allard."

"Then this visit is—eh—professional?" inquired Jallot. "You have a contribution for the paper?"

Antoinette was visibly embarrassed.

"I am right," he asserted. "Then, let me tell you, Mademoiselle, you have come at the most opportune moment. We are sadly in want of material for the next issue. If you have brought verse, essay, or narrative, I assure you that we shall be delighted to make use of your composition."

"I confess," she rejoined, with some reluctance, "that I have had the temerity to write a foolish little essay which I would have dared to offer a stranger but not you, Monsieur."

Jallot affected to be injured. "Mademoiselle, I am sure I have better taste than the man who usually occupies the editorial chair in this estab-

THE FOLLY OF BEING IMPETUOUS

lishment. I shall see at once the merits of your work, whereas he would have certainly failed to appreciate the delicate sentiments which have taken wing from your thoughts. I entreat you to let me read your essay."

She protested, but he insisted; and at last the manuscript lay on the counter before him. He read it through with interest, and all the while Antoinette watched his face with varying emotions. She was anxious that it should please him, but fearful that he would not be frank with her. "Now tell me truly," she implored, when he had finished, "whether it is worth anything."

"You have a gift, Mademoiselle. This is charming, far more so than I even hoped. I trust you will let me use it; and I wish you had more to offer."

Antoinette could not doubt him. His encouragement inspired her. She felt as though she must hurry back to the lodgings and set down the happy ideas which danced through her mind. "I shall be greatly obliged if you will print it," she said; "but that is all I have—now."

"Could I not induce you to write me something else immediately?" he wondered. "It would be a great favor to me as I have undertaken to publish 'Le Moniteur' to-night."

"I should be glad to help you, Monsieur, but there is so little time. Here it is, three o'clock already!"

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"Perhaps, if you were willing, I might find a place in the office where you could write, unseen and undisturbed." He saw that her surprise at this proposal was followed by an expression of irresolution of which he was quick to take advantage. "There is a table, behind that great pile of paper," he tempted. "You would be almost as private there as in your own house."

The girl was not proof against the desire to put her fancies into words with the certainty of seeing them in print, and she was also anxious to be of assistance to the man who had done so much for her foster-father; but, more than this she unconsciously yielded to a certain ordering of her heart.

Jallot made her as comfortable as possible in the far corner of the office, where she was screened from view by the high barricade of white paper, and placed a chair near her for Caresse, who presently fell asleep. Back at his desk again, the editor pro tem discovered that the proximity of the woman he loved in no wise contributed to concentration of thought. Nevertheless he kept steadfastly to his task; and two hours later, when Osbourne returned with a brace of compositors, the editor announced: "Our work has so far progressed that I know we can publish the paper to-night."

In a whisper he related to Osbourne the circumstances of Antoinette's visit and warned him not to disturb her. The sheriff, suppressing his mirth

THE FOLLY OF BEING IMPETUOUS

over the incident, set the compositors before the types, and began clearing the press for printing. At six o'clock Jallot asked the American to go to the nearest café and order a dinner sent into the office. In his absence, the editor turned to Antoinette and insisted that she should put down her pen.

"But I have not finished," she complained.

He picked up her manuscript and looked it over. "I beg your pardon, Mademoiselle, but you have finished. Here is a capital conclusion. You have gone on to say the same thing over again, which shows me that you are weary." As she dropped her head in chagrin, he added: "That is nothing to be ashamed of. Few writers know when to stop. If they did, what would be the use of editors?" All this was in a tone of tenderness. It caused her to raise her eyes to his, surprising a look of longing, which touched her even more deeply than the timbre of his voice.

She was standing close to him. Caresse was still asleep. The wall of paper shielded them from the busy compositors. They were both tired, and therefore the more easily ruled by impulse. His hand found hers of its own seeking, and she let herself be drawn to him without a show of resistance. Only as his arm closed about her and he stooped as though to kiss her, did she realize the full significance of the moment. Then, with a little cry, she thrust him away, her palms pressed

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT.

against his breast and her eyes glowing—more angry with herself than with him.

This was something he was not given to know. He stepped back from her, overwhelmed with remorse, and stood there the embodiment of humility, while she roused Caresse, and without looking at him again or venturing a word went to the door. Expressions of apology, and entreaties for forgiveness, halted on the tip of his tongue, for what could he say that would right him without adding to her embarrassment, encompassed about as they were with so many strange ears?

So he suffered her to go and remained behind, in ignorance of the fact that she had all but exonerated him. He believed that he had worked his own undoing in the very hour when his cause seemed to prosper as it never had before. Why had he not been satisfied to await a more pliant hour when less rudely he might have won from her the largess of affection which he had so rashly thought to take? This was the question he put to himself as he sat miserably at the desk, absently thumbing the pages covered with the thoughts that Antoinette had so happily set down.

He was presently roused from this melancholy revery by Osbourne, and the approach of dinner, but Jallot had no appetite. Still, as always, in times of depressed spirits, his mind went avidly about the work at hand. Misfortune in one way, only

THE FOLLY OF BEING IMPETUOUS

served to stimulate his purpose in another. He prodded the compositors, re-enthused Osbourne, and, having performed prodigies of editing himself, assembled the types and began the printing of the paper. His indomitable energy and persistence prevailed against all obstacles, so that late in the night he lifted from the press the last copy of that week's issue of "Le Moniteur de la Louisiane."

CHAPTER XXI

THE BEST OF THE SPOIL

As Jallot opened his eyes to the morning light, his first thought was of Antoinette. Indeed, some fancy, embodying her form, always seemed to be lying in wait for his awakening; but on that particular day his mind roused troubled at this visitation, since he saw a frown upon the face of the woman he loved. He remembered how, on the previous day, he had invited her displeasure by yielding to an impulse of his indiscreet heart. It seemed to him that he had torn a rent in the cloak of their friendship, but he wisely concluded that he must leave the mending of it to time, the great repairer of rifts.

With the dismissal of that worry, he began thinking about the problem of establishing her parentage, and to the solving of it he was resolved to give his immediate concern, for the day was drawing near when Delicado was to sail for Florida. He felt certain that the Spaniard possessed some knowledge of Antoinette's birth, and therefore, at an early hour that Sunday morning, he knocked at the door of No. 11 Rue Toulouse.

THE BEST OF THE SPOIL

The lazy-eyed servant, who answered his summons, declared that Delicado had gone up the river and would not be back for a week. This announcement disturbed Jallot all the more. He was impatient to begin the tracing of Antoinette's history, fearful lest some accident might prevent the Spaniard's return and so destroy for him the one link between Mademoiselle and her ancestry. This anxiety was in a measure relieved when he met Villebois and learned from him that Delicado, whose voyage was in the interest of the conspiracy, had faithfully promised to be in New Orleans not later than the third of July.

In affairs of moment Jallot was wont to control his naturally impatient spirit, but now he would have chafed under the enforced delay if the rehearsals of "The Judgment" had not demanded his attention for the next two days, diverting his thoughts and consuming his superfluous energy.

The première of his drama was happily accomplished. Again, from the rear of the theatre, but with different feelings, Jallot watched the performance of a play into which he had put the best of himself. His first doubts for its success speedily gave way to the certainty of its triumph, as it became clear to him that the audience understood his purpose and followed, with enthusiasm, the development of his tragic story. When the curtain closed upon the final scene, the spectators sat still for a moment under the spell of the drama-

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

tist, and then broke into spontaneous applause. As the cries of "bravo" echoed throughout the theatre, Jallot wondered how he had managed to write such a play, and offered up a prayer of gratitude to the muse who had guided his pen. With calls for "the author" ringing in his ears, the barber hurried away, panic-stricken with his success, and sat up half the night planning another tragedy.

On the following day he received a visit from Philippe Trudeau, who came puffing into the atelier, his fat, florid face corrugated with smiles. At the sight of Jallot, he made a quaint obeisance and wrung his hand in ponderous affection, saying that he was exceedingly proud of his protégé's success and was delighted to announce that the directors of "La Comédie" were so impressed by the new tragedy that they stood ready to commission its author to write regularly for their theatre. The old Creole further assured Jallot that he would be handsomely rewarded for his work and that they proposed to open negotiations for the performance of "The Judgment" in other cities; adding that all these evidences of recognition would surely lead to an increase in his revenue and reputation.

"Monsieur Jallot," said Trudeau, in conclusion, as he helped himself generously from the playwright's snuff-box, "if you wish to become associated with the Théâtre Saint Pierre in the capacity of author, you must abandon the folly of main-

THE BEST OF THE SPOIL

taining your shop. You will pardon me, but it is scarcely in keeping with the art you practice with such distinction."

"I assure you, Monsieur," laughed Jallot, "that I do not conduct this atelier for the sake of a whim, but as a matter of necessity."

"But the acceptance of our offer will remove that necessity."

"Then we need say no more," returned the barber; "I accept it."

"I shall have the agreement put in writing, and I promise you that the terms will be liberal."

Jallot bowed. "I know that I may safely leave that question to your generosity; and I wish you to know how grateful I am for the very friendly interest you have taken in my welfare. I only hope that my future work will prove as satisfactory to you as 'The Judgment.' Of course I can promise nothing, except that it will be the best I can produce."

Trudeau picked up his hat with a chuckle. "I am glad to hear you talk like that," he commented. "It indicates that your head still rests squarely on your shoulders in spite of your being a genius. Good morning!"

After he had gone, Jallot looked slowly about the atelier, giving each and every thing a glance of affection and wondering whether he would not sometimes long for the very shackles which, after so many years of endurance, he had now struck off.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

His meditation was broken by his assistant who came in bearing his luncheon. "Poupet," he began, "for a long, long time you have rendered me faithful service and real friendship; but we have come, and I regret it, to the place where each must go his own way. I am obliged to give up the administration of the atelier in order to devote myself to writing for the Théâtre Saint Pierre."

The quadroon wept. "Oh, Michié," he cried, "why fo' yo' do dad? Who can shave like yo'?—teach de dance?—hol' de foil?"

"But you shall inherit it all, my friend. The shop is yours by right of succession, just as it came to me from old Dominique; and that will settle my debt to you, if you will have it so."

"Id ain't de shop, Michié, or anyting else whad Ah care 'boud; only dad Ah kin no mo' be yo' assistand." Then, after a moment's reflection, he brightened up and added: "Michié, Ah tell yo' whad yo' kin plez do mebbe. Yo' goin' live here juz de same an' write yo' plays in de cabinet. Dad good bizness fo' Poupet! He kin say at his customers: "'Sieur Jallot ged his inspiration in dese shop'—*hein?*"

Jallot gave the quadroon his hand. "I agree to that, Poupet. Ah, if your head was as big as your heart, you would be a great man!"

"So long yo' like de heart of Poupet, he care notten 'boud de haid."

The barber was quite as well pleased with this

THE BEST OF THE SPOIL

arrangement as Poupet, since he was comfortably quartered over the atelier and could enjoy its cabinet and the garden, which, under the quad-roon's care, was kept in a state of perpetual blossoming.

There, in the shade of its rose trellis, Jallot used to sip his coffee of an afternoon and build vast plans for the future; and there, that very day, a page, wearing the livery of Honoré de Bienville, a director at the Théâtre Saint Pierre, brought him an ace of hearts on the back of which was written an invitation to the bal masqué at the Tivoli. Jallot knew then that the success of "The Judgment" had done more for him than put money in his purse.

CHAPTER XXII

VIOLET DOMINOES

Once in every week the noblesse of New Orleans assembled at the Tivoli to dance. Now and again these sociabilities took the form of a *bal masqué*. This afforded that essentially Parisian community the delightful excuse for a fête of dazzling color, and gave belles and beaux the protection of becoming disguises under which they might practice with impunity the art of coquetry and the craft of love-making.

In preparation for these entertainments, old cedar chests, crumbling leather trunks and dust covered high-boys, yielded up their wealth of ancestral finery, which had dazzled the courts of mother lands, or seen service in the days of the Cruel O'Reilly and the early French régime. Modistes reaped a harvest for cunning creations in fantastic designs, and tailors sat up night after night to cut and fit the whimsical conceits of dandies. There were others of noble birth, whose exchequers permitted no such extravagance, and these made shift to deck themselves by their own handicraft. Such was their ingenuity and

VIOLET DOMINOES

skill that often enough they outshone their anciently-accoutered and professionally-costumed rivals.

Antoinette, for one, was obliged to call upon her own resources to gown herself for the forthcoming ball at the Tivoli; and to that end she set about the making of a domino from a roll of violet silk which remained from her days of affluence.

While she was thus engaged, Ottilie, who had not seen her since Froebel had sold the villa on the Bayou Road, came down the Rue Bienville, looking for Antoinette's lodgings. The number, 73, showed indistinctly on the door post of the little brick house, which was two and a half stories high, and topped with a tiled roof and a dormer window. The second story boasted a latticed casement and a balcony, and it was there that Antoinette sat sewing. Tonton, whose bright eyes caught a glimpse of the girl through the partly drawn curtains, pointed her out to Ottilie, who lost no time in bringing Caresse to the door. The instant it was opened she darted by the *bonne* and up the stairs, and precipitated herself, regardless of ceremony, into the arms of Antoinette.

"*Coton mai!*" she cried; "you lovely truant! I have a mind to scold you. To think I never should have known where you were if had I not met Monsieur Froebel this morning on the Place d'Armes. What do you mean by hiding yourself from me?"

"*Chérie*, I have not been hiding myself from

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

any one, much less from you," protested Antoinette, returning Ottilie's embrace. "We have been so busy establishing ourselves here that I have not even taken a turn on the levee for days."

"I forgive you, dearest, merely because I am bursting with gossip for your ears, and ravenously curious to know what has befallen you since you left 'The Magnolias.'"

"Then you begin," encouraged Antoinette, "while I go on sewing."

"What lovely silk!" exclaimed the Creole girl, catching up the material and holding it so that the light fell fairly upon its delicate sheen. "Pray, what are you making?"

"Nothing but a simple little domino for the bal masqué at the Tivoli. Do you like it?"

"Beautiful!" She clasped her mittened fingers under her chin with pretty ecstasy. "It will be tremendously becoming to you, *chérie*," she added enthusiastically. "Besides, it is bound to be economical! You can wear almost any gown under it."

"It is not on that account that I am making it into a domino," smiled Antoinette. "It was simply to avoid being worn to death by the endless fittings of a modiste; and then, too, I am weary of being trumped out for all the world like a play actress."

"How sensible you are. I have a notion to go in a domino, too." She pondered for a moment,



"LET US WEAR OUR HEARTS ON OUR SLEEVES"

VIOLET DOMINOES

understanding very well that Antoinette could not afford the service of a modiste; and while she, herself, had already obtained an elaborate costume, her kind heart revolted at the idea of appearing to better advantage than her dearest friend. At that instant an idea came to her, which promised to solve the problem happily. "My dear," she began, "would it not be splendid if we should each wear a violet domino at the ball? Fancy the delicious confusion we should cause, having much the same figure and being dressed precisely alike. Think what sport we could make of the men!"

"I should like nothing better," declared Antoinette. "I have more than enough material for two dominoes and we can make them together."

They ratified the bargain with an embrace, and Otilie pointed out that they should give the dominoes some conspicuous decoration, which would be sure to set them apart from all others.

"For that night let us wear our hearts, embroidered in silver, on our sleeves," laughingly suggested Antoinette. This proposal met with the thorough approval of the Creole girl, who took off her bonnet and mittens and set about the fashioning of her domino.

"Now for your gossip," resumed Antoinette, as she plied her needle. "You were to begin."

Otilie moved her pretty head with a negative action. "I am sure that you have something more interesting to relate than I have."

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"On the contrary, *chérie*, my life for the past week has been most prosaic. My father and I found the management of the villa palling upon us, so we determined to give it up and take these simple lodgings, where he is close to his counting-room and where I am relieved of the direction of a great household. You have no idea," she concluded, "how much happier I am."

Otilie was almost persuaded that this was the truth as she looked at the quaint furnishings about her. The room, which was only small enough to be cosy, presented a smiling appearance with the sun blinking in through the cross-barred curtains. Its cream tinted walls were relieved at doors and windows with chintz hangings in rose designs, and the same cheerful material covered the seat at the casement, which was all abloom with potted geraniums. It was unmistakably the boudoir of a dainty woman. Under an ancient highboy a regiment of slippers shyly stood at parade rest; a lace petticoat hung from the support of a tall pier glass; an Indian scarf lay across the back of an easy chair; and a few books, a pair of gloves and a basket of drawn-work covered a small teak wood table.

"You are charmingly lodged, I must say," she remarked; "and I do not wonder that you like it here much better than you did at the villa."

"The only thing I miss," admitted Antoinette with a sigh, "is the garden and the sunsets." She

VIOLET DOMINOES

looked suspiciously tearful as she spoke and her companion remembered hearing that the straits into which old Froebel had fallen, demanded the change in their residence. She knew, too, that Antoinette possessed immense pride, and guessed that she was far less happy than she assumed to be. To Ottilie, her companion's attitude of contentment seemed nothing short of heroic, and she loved her confidante all the more on that account.

Not daring to show her sympathy, she adroitly skipped to another topic. "I was going to tell you about Jallot. Have you seen 'The Judgment?'"

"Yes," was the reply, "My father took me to see it on the opening night."

"Isn't it wonderful?"

Antoinette demurred. She quite agreed with Ottilie, but felt diffident about displaying her enthusiasm. "It was interesting," she finally admitted.

The Creole girl made a rebellious gesture. "Interesting, indeed! If that is the best you can say of it, I'm inclined to think you have no taste in such matters. Father says it is the work of a genius, and he knows. What is more, Jallot is to abandon his atelier and devote the rest of his life to being a genius. There's news for you, Mademoiselle! You will not dare call him a barber again; and I fancy that you will be very glad to say that you know him. I am!"

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

The animated gossip paused and folding her arms with an air of self-satisfaction, stared saucily at Antoinette, whose face reflected little of the intense interest which this intelligence aroused. "I am very glad to hear of Monsieur Jallot's good fortune," she said enigmatically.

Ottilie was disappointed. "That is not like you at all, Antoinette," she complained. "Sometimes I feel that I do not know you. It is your eyes. I look into them and see—nothing. I think you must have little shutters back there somewhere which you close up now and then to keep folks from peeping into your heart."

Antoinette took her accuser's hand. "Perhaps you are right, *chérie*; but sometimes it is very hard to tell you what I think. I really do not mean to be so horrid, and you must believe that I love you."

"Now, now, I can see!" cried the girl. "Oh, Antoinette, if you knew how much more adorable you are when you look like that, you would always keep the shutters of your eyes wide open."

"If I do not, it is only for the reason that I cannot help myself. Please forgive me, dearest, and go on with your sweet gossiping."

This at once restored Ottilie's spirits. She picked up the piece of silk, which had fallen to the floor, and resumed her sewing. "Monsieur Jallot has been invited to the ball. I had the news from father this morning."

VIOLET DOMINOES

"Oh!" gasped Antoinette in surprise. Then, shaking her head and smiling, she added: "They will spoil him."

"Delightful! I am spoilt myself, and I adore it! How happy Monsieur Jallot must be!"

"He would be much happier if they left him to his work. He has something better to do than to go philandering to balls. I am inclined not to go myself." Antoinette was clearly displeased. She was ambitious for Jallot and disliked the idea of his association with the idle society of a frivolous city.

Ottilie looked at her in dismay. "You don't mean that you are angry with me—that we shall not go to the Tivoli in twin dominoes? Oh, Antoinette!" Her appeal was irresistible.

The reply was penitent enough to set her mind at rest. "No, no, no, *ma chérie!* Did I seem angry? Oh, forgive me! We shall go just as we planned; and I am sure we shall hold our own with the prettiest!"

CHAPTER XXIII

MASQUES, MOONLIGHT AND MALIGNITY

On that lovely June night, which fell to the lot of the bal masqué, the rays of the Tivoli's lanterns gleamed far down the Bayou Road and across the brackish waters of Lake Pontchartrain.

"Moreau has outdone himself," mused Jallot, as he drew near the place and saw the foliage tinselled with light, as though swarming with glow-worms, and the mansion festooned with vari-colored lamps—all casting a mysterious glimmer over the motley garbed company now thronging terrace and verandas; while the ball room's great French windows, thrown wide open to the fragrant air, revealed a picture of enchantment, as potentate and shepherdess, Indian-maid and Chinese mandarin, buccaneer and casket-girl, Pierrette and dragoon, voyageur and empress moved in a revel of color through the stately measures of a minuet.

Jallot made his way to a group of masquers at a window and watched the dance, scrutinizing every couple with the hope of discovering Antoinette. He believed that he would know her step among a hundred, and when the minuet was

MOONLIGHT AND MALIGNITY

finished he was satisfied that she had not appeared on the floor. He stepped back from the window with the idea of taking a turn upon the veranda, when he felt a tug at his sword and heard the familiar voice of Villebois. He was saying, "Pardon me, your majesty, but you are sticking me in the ribs."

"I apologize, Monsieur Esquimo," returned Jallot in a bass tone, laughing at the furry costume in which the Creole cut a ridiculous figure. "Can you tell me if Delicado is here to-night?" he supplemented in a hoarse whisper.

"Who the devil are you?" exclaimed Villebois.

"His Grace, de Grammont," replied Jallot, who wore a court dress of mauve, fashioned after the style of Charles II.

"Only a duke?" jested the Creole, lifting his mask a little to mop his brow. "By your grand air I thought you at least a king."

"The fact is, my perspiring friend, I am a barber." This, to the other's ear in confidence.

"Jallot!" chuckled Villebois. "What a find! Let us seek adventure in company; only, I pray you, do not inveigle me into a dance, unless you can find me an iceberg for a partner."

They linked arms and started around the veranda, which was lively with promenaders who stopped to look after the strangely contrasted pair and make jests at their expense. This was precisely what Villebois enjoyed—attracting attention

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

and having the opportunity to display his satirical wit in silencing the gibbers. While Jallot took his part in the raillery, he kept watch for some sign of Antoinette.

"There's one who looks cool enough to partner you," joked the barber, calling his companion's attention to a tall and imperious woman, who wore the white robes of Napoleon's Josephine.

"I commend your observation, Grammont. That's Mademoiselle DeVic. I know the nape of her patrician neck. And that gentleman, in the purple robe of Richelieu, buzzing so persistently to her ear-rings, is your friend Gazonac. Let us draw near that we may listen to the dulcet strains of his voice as he woos my lady."

"Is he really serious in his attentions?" inquired Jallot.

"He is mad about her!" Villebois rejoined, leading his companion close to the couple.

Gazonac was speaking. This is what they heard. "If you knew, you would not be the least bit jealous!"

"Jealous!" balked the lady. "Do not flatter yourself."

"I meant to say," he countered, evidently seeing his mistake; "that you would not doubt my scorn for her if you were acquainted with the facts."

"What are they, then?" she insisted, as though it were a repeated interruption.

"I am not free to tell you."

MOONLIGHT AND MALIGNITY

"Since you do not trust me, you need not address me." Mademoiselle DeVic turned her back upon Gazonac and entered the ball room. He pondered for a moment in vexation, then hurried after her.

"What do you make of that?" asked Jallot, questioning Villebois:

"He was not ready enough with a lie," laughed the Creole. "Now he has thought of one, which I hope will excuse the love affair she seems to have uncovered."

This explanation did not satisfy the barber. He feared that Antoinette might be the woman alluded to in the conversation he had overheard; and this thought made him more eager than ever to find the ward of old Froebel. Just then, turning a corner of the veranda, they met a muscular woodsman, garbed from head to foot in deerskin, with a maid in a violet domino swinging on his arm.

Jallot stopped them with a salutation, saying to the frontiersman, "I entreat you, Monsieur, to exchange your domino for my Esquimo. He is agreeable company, but does not dance and I hear the first bars of a gavotte."

"The exchange is made," exclaimed the girl in violet, dropping her escort's arm and accepting Jallot's. "Thank you, Monsieur Forester, for your company, and *au revoir*—only *au revoir*!"

"Prove that you are in earnest, by meeting me

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

here within a half hour and I shall forgive your desertion," said the woodsman.

"It is a rendezvous," she returned.

"But what is to become of me?" whined Villebois.

"That's easily told," declared Jallot, seizing him by the wrist and feigning to study his palm; "you are to be bored for the next twenty-five minutes by Monsieur Osbourne, to whom I have the honor of presenting you."

Before the American had recovered from the surprise of being thus identified, the barber and his partner were dancing in the ball room.

"I must tell you," he was saying, "that I am highly honored by your ready acceptance of the exchange, Mademoiselle."

"I should not have been so daring had I not known you when you bowed, Monsieur Jallot."

"What a clever little woman you are, Mademoiselle Trudeau!"

"I am not Mademoiselle Trudeau," she fabricated. "I am—no! you must guess!"

Jallot laughed. "I would not venture to contradict you, or to hazard another guess, so I shall call you 'The Lady with Her Heart on Her Sleeve'."

"You have christened me and danced with me, which is quite enough for one night. Now take me back to my big forester."

MOONLIGHT AND MALIGNITY

"Only upon one consideration—that you tell me how Mademoiselle Froebel is dressed."

"Very becomingly!"

That was all that she would admit, so Jallot, who had accosted her with the sole object of learning something of Antoinette, gladly returned her to the corner of the veranda to keep tryst with Osbourne.

"Your gallant is not at his post," said the quasi-duke. "You will have to endure my company until he returns."

"No, no! You must not," she admonished. "Go seek another partner. I am content." Noting his hesitation she insisted that if he stayed she would never dance with him again. Thus advised, he bowed and went in quest of Mademoiselle. He passed through the ball room, looking from right to left, and finally stepped out upon another part of the veranda. There he saw Osbourne talking with a girl in a violet domino. Looking closer, he made out a heart embroidered on her sleeve. "Most extraordinary!" he mused. "She must have flown here." To satisfy himself that he could not be mistaken, Jallot turned back to where he had left Ottilie. There she stood, surrounded by a group of gallants. "It seems there are two violet dominoes with hearts upon their sleeves. If, as I am certain, one is Mademoiselle Trudeau, then Osbourne is doubtless being duped by the other, who may possibly be the lady I am

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

seeking. In which case I might do worse than to feign that I believe her to be Mademoiselle Trudeau."

Jallot hurried then to the place where he had seen Osbourne and the domino, only to miss them; but presently he discovered the couple in the ball room, dancing the minuet. As he watched them he was convinced that the American's partner was Antoinette. At the conclusion of the dance, he spoke to her.

"Mademoiselle Trudeau," he began; "I trust that you will honor me with your arm."

She bowed, in fairly good imitation of Ottilie's best manner, while Osbourne glared at Jallot through his mask, remarking: "I would suggest that you find a partner for yourself, instead of filching mine."

"The matter of choice should be left entirely to Mademoiselle," rejoined the other with amiability.

In answer, the domino slipped her gloved hand through the arm of the man in mauve, and left the frontiersman to his own devices. He wheeled about, in a temper, and stalked out on the terrace, where he was amazed to encounter Ottilie. She abandoned a numerous escort, and, much to the sheriff's bewilderment, demanded to know why he had not kept his rendezvous with her.

"Why do you ask that," he complained, "when you deserted me but a few moments ago?"

She laughed gaily. "What a delicious simple-

MOONLIGHT AND MALIGNITY

ton you are! But I forgive you! Come, let us look at the lake." She led him to the balustrade.

"I confess I am completely mystified by your conduct, Mademoiselle Trudeau; but so long as your humor is gay, I may presume that you are not displeased with me?" His tone was interrogatory. "At least you are smiling!"

"Do not be too sure about my feelings, Monsieur. We smile and hate here at the same time. Teeth do not wear mourning."

"I can see, under the edge of your mask, that you are smiling at me now. Does that mean—?"

She shook her head. "It might—but—it doesn't!"

He had never known anyone so elusive as Otilie was that night. "Then I may take it to signify—what?"

"That I am happy."

They stood together for a while in silence, looking across the lake, which lay asleep under the moon's silvery counterpane; and frequently, when a light squall riffed it, the water seemed to stir as in a dream.

"May I come directly to the point?" he asked, presently.

"That is not our way in New Orleans!"

"So I have observed. Must I learn your fashions?"

The girl hesitated, wondering how far she should lead him. She knew very well what he meant, and

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

the knowledge that he cared a great deal for her made her happy that night; but she thought best to put on a coquettish disposition for the purpose of veiling her true sentiments.

"Did you hear my question, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes, Monsieur. I was deliberating, and I have decided that I prefer you to remain a barbarian."

"But I have no mind to remain a bachelor."

"What a stupid the dear thing is," she thought. "That remark came at least ten minutes too soon. I shall punish him." She turned away from the balustrade and said aloud: "I fancy that your fate should be left to the decision of some amiable woman's mind, rather than to your own."

Osbourne felt repulsed, and became silent. When they reached the mansion he permitted a Pierrot to whisk Otilie away without a word of protest; and a few minutes later, sauntering back across the terrace, in a rather despondent mood, he was dumbfounded to discover a violet domino leaning over the balustrade by the side of the odious person, who called himself His Grace, de Grammont. He paused at this sight and, eaves-dropping, heard the man say:

"Mademoiselle Trudeau, did you ever see such a wonderful night! If ever a woman cared for me, I wish I might talk to her of love on a night like this beneath the magnolias in the soft air heavy with perfume the moonlight falling upon her face upturned to me."

MOONLIGHT AND MALIGNITY

Osbourne tiptoed away and went back to the town perturbed and disconsolate. Ignorant of his friend's unhappy error, Jallot was enjoying what he would likely have described as "a piquant situation." Both he and Antoinette well knew that each was aware of the other's identity, yet chose to play the comedy out in the rôles of the Creole girl and His Grace, de Grammont. She had recognized the barber by his hands, but never did she call him by any name save the one he had assumed for the night, and he addressed her only as Mademoiselle Trudeau.

From the fragile rampart of this whimsy, Antoinette dared an exchange of sentiments with the man who so adroitly besieged her affections; for she felt safe to utter, in the character of Otilie, many a word which she would not have had the temerity to speak in her proper person. The girl was rejoiced that she could in this wise make amends for the rebuff she had administered to Jallot in the office of "Le Moniteur."

"Now, if you were only a poet," she was saying, "you might make this night live forever to us by preserving it in a sonnet."

"And if I were a poet, I am sure I should try something more ambitious than a sonnet. The subject demands the deeper organ tone of majestic blank verse."

"Perhaps your Grace is a poet, and the muse

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

would labor were she not distracted by my chatter. I will go," she teased, starting from him.

He stopped her with a gesture. "You are my muse," he declared. "Pray stay to be wooed."

"How troublesome to be obliged to re-woo your muse whenever you wish to compose a verse!" She laughed a little and added: "Don't you find it so?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle," he admitted, "it gives me such a hopeless sense of insecurity. Fancy the necessity of courting your wife over and over again to keep her from flying out of the window."

"Delightful!—for the wife," mocked Antoinette, as she caught a falling magnolia petal, and pressed it between her palms. "If I were the husband I should put bars on the windows and bolts on the door."

"That wouldn't do, Mademoiselle. Love jests at gaolers."

"You are mixing your figures of speech, like a true poet," she plagues. "Or do you take your muse, your wife and your love to be one and the same?"

Jallot leaned a little closer to Antoinette as he replied: "I have wished they might be; but, at the very moment when I thought my hope was taking tangible shape—when it seemed to become incarnate in a woman—whiff!—she went out of the window. Upon my soul, Mademoiselle, I was never so dismayed—for I loved that woman."

MOONLIGHT AND MALIGNITY

In the moonlight Antoinette saw in the eyes of the masquer a look which brought her hands to her heart with a protecting action. She did not fear him, but herself, for his voice, the message of his eyes, and the night worked a potent spell upon her.

"It—it is too bad," she stammered, and attempted a laugh, "that you frightened your—your muse."

"Oh, if I only frightened her, she might return—do you think?" He flung out his hand to her in vivid entreaty.

She remembered then, too well, what she had once said of that wonderful hand; and its power of beseechment was even greater than she had fancied it ever could be. It seemed to cry out its passionate plea, and she found herself drawn toward the speaker hypnotically.

"You understand?" Jallot asked in a whisper.

His voice distracted her attention, breaking the spell. Her hand, which had unconsciously started toward his, dropped on the balustrade. Mastering herself, she replied, "No Monsieur!" This was in such a gentle tone, that the barber felt no hurt. In truth he took that negative rejoinder as a mere expedient to draw out the time of his probation, to stay him from the questioning of her affection, which, perhaps at that mesmeric hour she could not justly weigh in honor to herself and him.

So neither spoke for a moment, while the magic

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

night drew about them the invisible mantle of its poesy. Under its sorceric folds their thoughts were transferred, each to the other, without the need of words. Presently, as though by mutual agreement, they turned toward the mansion—her arm in his—and crossed the terrace in silence.

At the veranda a matador claimed her and Jallot did not see his violet domino again until he found himself with a mermaid for a partner, dancing opposite to her in a minuet.

On his left stood Mademoiselle De Vic and Gazonac apparently in the best of humors, so that the barber concluded they must have mended their quarrel; but he soon forgot them in the fascination of watching Antoinette. Once she touched his hand as they formed a canopy under which pirouetted an oriole and a buccaneer. She seemed to take no notice of him, yet he was sure that the pressure of her fingers in that brief contact could not have been unintentional. Jealously he sought to discover the identity of her gallant, who danced so grotesquely in the guise of Oliver Cromwell; and he was much relieved when he detected old Froebel beneath the Roundhead's casque.

Again his attention was attracted to Mademoiselle De Vic. He heard her say to Gazonac: "Certainly that cannot be the creature in the violet domino."

"No, Mademoiselle," he rejoined, "that is Otilie Trudeau."

MOONLIGHT AND MALIGNITY

"It would be like the wench—"

Jallot heard no more, for at that instant a trumpet call sounded through the ball room, the music stopped abruptly and the cry, "Unmask! unmask! unmask!" went up in lively cadences from the dancers.

It was a poignant moment for many a belle, who remembered what she had said to her partner in the rashness of coquetry behind a mask, and more than one hesitated to strip herself of that protecting bit of silk or velvet; but she had no choice. Her cavalier showed no quarter, gaily laying hands upon his lady's mask, all eagerness to see the fair face concealed beneath it. There were little outcries of protest and much laughter—one blushing, another showing bravado—over the incident.

With unconcern Antoinette unveiled her features, yet she did not venture to look at Jallot, who could not keep his eyes from her. He was thinking how adorable she appeared as she leaned confidently upon the arm of the old German, and turned her head to speak to Grandpré, a young Creole, standing at her side. Suddenly he was startled by an exclamation from Mademoiselle De Vic. He could not distinguish her words, because the music struck up again as she spoke, but it was plain that she was exceedingly angry.

"Your hand," besought Grandpré, offering to resume the minuet with Mademoiselle De Vic.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"Pardon me," she balked, with hauteur.

"Mademoiselle is ill," hastily put in Gazonac.

"I am perfectly well, Monsieur," declared the lady; "but," waving her fan toward Antoinette, "I will not dance on the floor with a yellow girl!"

A momentary hush fell upon those who heard this declaration. Antoinette stared at her accuser in speechless wonderment, while Froebel, showing dismay in his face, looked appealingly at Jallot. The barber, having no proof with which to refute the charge against the woman he loved, yet frantic to defend her, stood dumb, suffering exquisite torture.

Grandpré, a chivalrous youth, was the first to speak. "Mademoiselle De Vic," he exclaimed; "that is a terrible imputation! I trust you will be so kind as to retract it! You must be mistaken."

"It is true," she retorted with vehemence. "I have it upon the word of Monsieur Gazonac."

"Shame!" cried Jallot's partner. "Are there no men here to give him the lie?"

"They dare not," Gazonac defied. "Froebel himself knows that the woman is an octoroon."

His words drove the blood in a torrent to the heart of Antoinette; her face became ivory-white, her eyes dilated with terror. She caught her foster-father's hand in a frenzy and cried: "My father!—speak! you know it is not true! It is some monstrous jest! I am not an octoroon! No! no!"

MOONLIGHT AND MALIGNITY

"We—we must go," stammered the old man, huskily, and turned away trembling a little in every limb.

Reading confirmation of the hideous charge in Froebel's crushed demeanor, the company shrank from Antoinette as though she were a leper; and the girl, understanding, made a piteous attempt to be brave and even smiled as she shuddered, seeing Jallot bow to her.

"Mademoiselle, pray honor me," said he, offering Antoinette his arm. She accepted it, scarcely knowing what she did; and as they made to go, the barber called over his shoulder to Gazonac: "Monsieur, I hope to have the pleasure of killing you."

CHAPTER XXIV

NIGHT AND THE SHARD IN A WOMAN'S SOUL

Antoinette, numb in brain and body, understood little of what Jallot or Froebel said to her in the way of consolation, as they journeyed to town from the Tivoli ball; and even when she was left alone in her boudoir that night she did not at once realize the full significance of the terrible stigma cast upon her. The cruel denunciation at Moreau's seemed unreal. She could not believe at first that she had suffered that great humility. They had called her an octoroon, and no one, not even her father, was able to deny the indictment. She tried to consider what it meant; but it seemed impossible for her to think. She could not fix her mind steadfastly upon the situation. Her thoughts followed her eyes, not her will. Small and unobtrusive things, which she had never even seen before, now loomed up in extraordinary detail. She noted for the first time that every other rose in the design of her curtains was a different shape; that one leg of her dressing table was not perfectly straight; that a pair of slippers under the high-boy stood pigeon-toed; that there was a

THE SHARD IN A WOMAN'S SOUL

crack in the plastering over the door. Innumerable trifles attracted her attention and mixed themselves up with the idea upon which she was trying to focus her mind. One by one these insignificant things faded from her mental vision, and the power of thought began to return to her. Then, as she pondered, all her fancy gathered about the single thought, "I am an octoroon!" As the horror of that belief worked its way into her soul, she made a great moan and flung out her arms in agony, calling upon her God to take her life.

The sound of the watch, passing in the street below, frightened her. Never had she felt so utterly alone, abandoned, desperate and miserable. She huddled herself in a corner of the window seat, and wished that in the morning she might be found there dead. Perhaps then they would have some pity for the poor octoroon!

Would the world go on just the same without her? What would become of her violet domino? Would they bury her in that or in the old white silk? She remembered how happy she had been when she last wore that gown. It was at the Théâtre Saint Pierre. Yes, that was a wonderful night for Jallot! . . . Jallot! What emotions his name conjured! He had loved her. She was sure of that; but now—she who had been Mademoiselle of the Magnolias, was nothing but a yellow girl; and he, who had been nothing but a barber, was Monsieur Magnifique—ah, he must look down

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

upon her with horrid condescension. No! She could not suffer that. Yet, she might have loved him, too!

Her thoughts became chaotic again and her only wish was for death. In self-pity she wept, but out of that storm of misery came a beneficent calm. Grief gave place to hope when, from the cloister of her memory, re-echoed the parting words of Jallot: "Mademoiselle, I believe you to be as white as I am; and I pledge myself to prove you so before the world."

Since he believed, what mattered it if the whole world thought differently! And she had such faith in his power to accomplish all that he set out to do, that she smiled a little and chided herself for being despondent.

She arose and looked into the mirror. "Though you are pale," said she to her image, "you are not changed; and if he loved you yesterday, why not to-morrow?—even though you be a yellow girl. But you are not that!" she cried, staring at her reflection. A sudden thought prompted her to examine her nails, which were pink-tinted, like the delicate coloring of a sea shell. "There is nothing there—not a shadow of taint. Why have they called me an octoroon?" At this demand, Froebel's explanation came back to her. He had found her a little slave girl and had adopted her, not knowing who or what her parents were, satisfied that her blood was clean. This half-truth

THE SHARD IN A WOMAN'S SOUL

was Jallot's invention, for the barber meant to spare her the ignominious knowledge that he had bought her.

Antoinette's mind clung fast in new confidence to the assurances of the two men, who had proved their devotion to her; and she longed for the arms of one that, in her weariness, she might rest secure, believing in his power to keep off those terrors with which the long night was bound to enshroud her dreams. Troubled, indeed, was the sleep that finally cradled her; and when the lag-gard dawn showed its wan face at her window, she woke with a start, as though someone had knocked rudely at the portal of her soul. All that she had suffered—from the moment of Mademoiselle De Vic's accusation to the vague period when the kindly night had dimmed her thought with its lethargy—became visualized to her, passing before her in spectral panorama. She reviewed it as though she were not the chief actor in those piteous scenes. They seemed far apart from her—the episodes of years long past—the miseries of another self. Only when her eyes fell upon the violet domino, where it lay among those dainty, intimate things, which she had donned so gaily but a few hours ago, did she realize that it was she, Antoinette, who had endured the agony which was of yester-night.

What was to become of her now? Her father had said that the disclosure, true or untrue, could

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT.

in no wise change their dear relations; and Jallot, too, had promised fealty. Were they, as she had thought, all the world? What of those friends, like Ottilie? Must she lose them? Dared she go into the street? The whole city of New Orleans must surely know of her sinister indictment. She would be pointed at with scorn and made the butt of hideous jest. These thoughts came back to her again and again with ever increasing torture, until out of her travail came a project to escape the horror of her state by immediate return to France. She resolved to sail by the first ship. She had friends there and, at the worst, she could seek the shelter of a convent.

Antoinette disclosed this plan to her foster-father that morning and he tacitly agreed that no better method of relieving her distress could be devised; but counselled that she make no preparation for departure until he had consulted with Jallot, whom he secretly hoped would find the means to mend their great unhappiness.

Froebel had scarcely gone when Ottilie, braving parental command, came seeking Antoinette, who, at the sight of the Creole girl, lost all her fortitude and with a sob flung herself into those arms held out to her so sympathetically. Long they sat together, mingling their tears. They had no need of words. The sorrow of one was the grief of the other, and with this understanding, a sense of

THE SHARD IN A WOMAN'S SOUL

peace came over Antoinette. Her troubled heart ceased its feverish flutterings and her weary head lay still upon the mothering shoulder of her confidante.

CHAPTER XXV

THE HEART OF THE YELLOW KITTEN

To Jallot's attentive ears old Froebel confided how grievously Antoinette was stricken with ignominy and how she was determined to shun any further humility by voyaging to France.

"That must only be her last resort," insisted the barber. "Give me time and I am convinced that I shall be able to prove her free from any taint of blood. At least I shall learn the truth of her parentage. Bid her take heart, assure her of our faith that she is white and entreat her to have a little patience. Leave all the rest to me."

Thus encouraged the old German imparted to Antoinette their hopes for reinstating her caste before the world, and she resigned herself to wait a week or so, only half-believing in Jallot's power to remove the hideous stain from her escutcheon. A little later, reminded of his success in so many other undertakings, she grew more sanguine about the outcome of his efforts in her behalf. Whatever he touched seemed to prosper no matter how great were the odds against him. She thought of how he had wrested himself from his own mean

THE YELLOW KITTEN

state; and now Froebel brought the news of the safe arrival of "The Olympe" from Pensacola, giving an earnest of still better fortune to come.

In the meantime the barber anxiously awaited Delicado's return. On the evening of July third he sent Poupet to the Spaniard's lodging with a note requesting an appointment. The answer came back that Delicado was at home, but much fatigued, and he therefore begged to be excused until the following night, when he would be glad to receive Jallot shortly before midnight, the hour set for a final conference of the conspirators.

Satisfied with this, the barber despatched word to Osbourne that he must call at the atelier on the next afternoon without fail.

When the American came, Jallot told him of the proposed midnight meeting and suggested that, although he had secured no proof of Casa Calvo's association with the enterprise, they should wait no longer, but arrest the conspirators as they assembled at Delicado's.

"There is but one objection to my plan," said the barber. "I had arranged a duel with Gazonac for to-morrow evening. The arrest will deprive me of the satisfaction of killing him."

"I'm sorry for that," admitted Osbourne, who had heard how the Frenchman had broken faith by denouncing Antoinette as an octoroon, and he had so far set aside his prejudice to duelling as to agree that Jallot was in honor bound to call out

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

Gazonac. "Nevertheless," he went on, "you will be satisfying your revenge in another way."

"But it is not a matter of revenge," contended Jallot. "It is a case of administering punishment. He has broken faith with a woman—for I was only acting as Antoinette's agent—which is worse than breaking the law of man, or conspiring against the government. Oh, I am greatly disappointed to think that he is to escape me, even to become a prisoner of the State."

While they were discussing these affairs in the cabinet, Jérôme returned from the monastery and immediately sought Poupet. The boy had been impatiently waiting for that day—the Fourth of July—to realize his longing to raise the American flag over the atelier. He found the quadroom in the garden, and at once suggested that they should set about the patriotic play, which his accomplice had promised.

Poupet demurred. He had some little hesitancy about the wisdom of hanging the bunting outside the court, but Jérôme overcame his objections, and finally, with the assistance of a ladder and a great deal of foolery, they draped the banner from a flower-box, which filled a niche over the street entrance.

Twilight was falling when they completed the ceremony. As Poupet descended from the ladder, he saw Gazonac coming toward them through the dusk.

THE YELLOW KITTEN

"So Jallot is celebrating the Fourth of July?" questioned the Frenchman, accosting the quadroon and pointing up at the flag with a jeer.

"No, Michié," replied Poupet, cautiously; "we are! Dad is Jérôme's flag. We goin' t' give 'Sieur Jallot subbrize when he see dad banner de Unitee Stade, Amerikee, yo' bed. *Hein*, Jérôme?"

"I think it will surprise him," laughed Gazonac, significantly, and passed on down the street in a hurry.

The quadroon looked after him with a dubious feeling, and remarked to Jérôme, "Ah guess we beddah say notin' 'bout dad flag to Michié Jallot—so we nod spoil de subbrize. Come 'long! Ah ged yo' suppah now."

Jérôme objected. He wanted to dine with Jallot, but the quadroon explained that the master was engaged, and satisfied the boy by promising that he could see "Papoute" before going to bed.

The child had not finished his simple meal of gumbo filet when Poupet was called to the atelier door by the beating of an impudent tattoo upon the knocker. The visitor was Tonton, whom he had not seen for a week.

"Ah am send ad yo' house wid a leddah fo' Michié Osbourne," she announced. "He nod ad his lodgin's."

"Dad iz de des' luck possib'," joyed Poupet, making an elaborate bow.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"He iz ad dis plaze?"

"Yez, bud yo' no kin see him now."

"Den Ah godd to leaf de leddah fo' him," she said.

Poupet made a grimace of protest. "Yo' nod goin' leaf de mos' precious leddah in anybody's hands but de gennleman's to whad id iz address?"

"Whad Ah goin' do den?" inquired Tonton.

He brought a chair from the wall and offered it to her. "Yo' goin' waid; also lizzen to me."

"Dad iz a fool—"

"Yo' tink differend iv yo' hear," he interrupted, and, with a gesture, entreated her to be seated.

Tonton smiled indulgently, spreading her skirt over the chair. "Ah hear a lill' bid. Whad yo' godd fo' to say now?"

"Ah goin' to marrie yo'!" Poupet made this declaration with his hands thrust deeply into his hip pockets, and his whole posture one of profound determination.

The Yellow Kitten gave a sniff of intolerance. "Yo' aind godd 'nuff money, even iv Ah care fo' dad ged marrie."

"Ah guess yo' dond hear de noos," he laughed, triumphantly.

Tonton became seriously interested. "Michié Jallot give yo' dese shob?"

He shook his head and burst into a fit of merriment.

"Yo' crazzie!" she jeered a little uncertainly.

THE YELLOW KITTEN

"Yez, ve'y crazzie," he roared. "I ged de lod-dery prize!"

"De loddery?" She jumped to her feet. "How much dad money?"

Poupet assumed a grand and indifferent air as he replied, "Plendy nuff so Ah buy dese shob an' kin marrie anybody Ah like."

"Dad ve'y nize—fo' de pusson yo' like," insinuated the girl.

"Who is yo'," blurted her lover.

Tonton demurred a moment, as though weighing an important question and then rejoined, "Well, Ah tink 'boud dad."

"Yo' plez tink quick. Ah mighd exchange my mind."

This warning did not frighten the Yellow Kitten. She was confident enough of her power over him to play indifferent, too, and then she did not propose to be too easily won. "Of course yo' ad liberdy to do dad, Poupet. Only den Ah nod take de trooble to tink, or to pud a red rose in my hair sometime."

"Why yo' goin' to pud a red rose in you' hair?" he asked.

"To tell de pusson whad like to marrie me dad Ah have tink de 'yes.' But id iz possib' dad Ah pud a yaller rose in my hair."

"Fo' whad, Tonton?"

"Fo' de 'no!'"

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

At that moment Jallot and Osbourne, their plans concluded for the night's important business, came into the atelier. Seeing the American, Tonton turned and offered him the letter, saying, "Dese iz fo' yo', Michié."

He took the note and glanced through it hastily. "Tell your mistress that I thank her."

The girl dropped him a courtesy, and, with a saucy look at Poupet, went out. He did not wait a moment, but, much to Jallot's amusement, snatched up his hat and started after her.

"If you were as persistent about winning the mistress as Poupet is about conquering the maid, I should have no doubt about your success, my friend," said the barber.

Osbourne laughed. "I'm afraid I do lack his enterprise and yours; but to-night at least will remove any possibility of Lemaitre's re-entering the field against me."

"No, no," objected Jallot; "we are to spare him."

"That will not be necessary." Osbourne gave his companion the letter he had just received. "Read that," he drawled.

The note was brief. It said: "Beware of Monsieur Lemaitre. His jealousy has made him bold. He will kill you if he can take you unawares. Tell Monsieur Jallot that I relieve him of his promise to spare this gentleman. Otilie Trudeau."

THE YELLOW KITTEN

Jallot looked up. "Quite significant," he remarked.

"Plain, I should say."

"My dear Osbourne, you are to be congratulated."

"I fail to see—"

"That Mademoiselle Trudeau has had a thorough change of heart?"

"No news to me!" rejoined the American. "She discarded Lemaitre weeks ago."

"I see you will not understand," plagued Jallot. "I said 'a thorough change of heart.' To jilt one lover means but a partial revolution of affection. A woman must take up a new one to make the change thorough."

Osbourne shook his head. "You cannot convince me that women are so readily off with the old and on with the new."

"In my all-too-brief experience," smiled the barber, "I have found that some folks change their affections as lightly as they doff their clothes."

"Mademoiselle Trudeau is not so fickle as that!" Osbourne was angry.

"How you storm in her defense," laughed the barber. "She is not fickle! No, no! only wise. For instance, I would not accuse you of vacillating because you discarded a coat which you found uncomfortable, and substituted a better fitting garment. In all seriousness I think that women are more constant than men. I do not believe

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

that Mademoiselle Trudeau's affection for Lemaitre was genuine. I have the fancy that now she has found a love which she will wear, like her skin, until she dies."

Osbourne seized the speaker by the shoulders, and, looking him fairly in the eyes, asked, "You are not making sport of me?"

"No, man; but I shall be if you stay here when you should be taking the Bayou Road to knock at the door of Mademoiselle's heart."

"You would go to her, Jallot?"

"I would fly to her!" He gave the sheriff a push toward the door. "Good luck, old friend!"

"Whether I win or lose I shall be here by ten o'clock to-night, depend upon me," were Osbourne's parting words.

CHAPTER XXVI

A CRESCENDO OF HYSTERIA

For almost an hour after his conversation with Osbourne, Jallot sat at the atelier window considering how he had best approach Delicado so that he might not fail to secure the facts of Antoinette's parentage. He was determined that before the meeting of the conspirators the Spaniard should yield up to him whatever knowledge he possessed of the girl's history. The case was urgent, and the barber was prepared to hazard, if need be, even the State's cause to wrest the information from Delicado.

As he pondered there, the twilight, like a purple veil, enveloped the place; and soon the deeper blue of night scarfed up the garden. Poupet began lighting the studio candles and Jérôme came tiptoeing to the window.

"Papoute," he purred, rubbing his cheek against Jallot's hand; "ain'd yo' goin' to put me to bed?"

The barber caught the boy up in his arms, and set him on his knee. "If you promise not to scold me for forgetting, Jérôme, I will tell you a sleepy story."

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"A sleepy story?" The child was puzzled.

"Did your mother never tuck you up for the night between a song and a story?" asked Jallot, with assumed surprise.

Jérôme shook his curly head, and laid his small hand on the barber's cheek with a coaxing caress. "Papoute, yo' put me to bed like dat."

"Very well; here goes for the story, and a true one," began Jallot. "Once upon a time, long, long ago, when I was a little fellow—not very much bigger than you—"

"How big?"

He illustrated. "I lived in a far-away country where they were exceedingly busy cutting off the heads of kings and princes."

Jérôme became animate with interest. "Oh," he cried, sitting up straight; "did you ever see a prince?"

"Better than that, *chéri*; I have played with a princess."

"A really, truly princess?"

Jallot smiled at the boy's wonderment. "Her papa was a prince, so I fancy that she must have been a princess."

"What was her name, Papoute?"

"Marguerite."

"Was her hair all gold?"

"I forget what her hair was like. I only remember that she was so small that I could carry her on my back all over the ship."

A CRESCENDO OF HYSTERIA

Jérôme's eyes widened. "A ship!" he gasped. "Were yo' on a big ship?"

"A huge ship," rejoined the barber. "The princess was running away with her mother, and I with mine, to this country where they let folks wear their heads."

"I wish I had a big ship," sighed the boy.

Jallot drew him a little closer as he said, "I hope your ship, when it comes, will not be like 'The Golden Hope.' It was a sad ship, Jérôme; on that voyage my mother died, and the little princess's mother died—and both went down, down into the sea."

After a moment's consideration, Jérôme announced, with conviction, "Then you were orphings!"

"Without a doubt, we were," smiled the barber; "and I had to pretend to be the little princess's father because she had no one to take care of her."

"Where were all her slaves and soldiers, Pa-poute?"

"Left behind in France, I suppose; and no one, but I, knew that she was a princess."

The boy was still for a little while, and then inquired, sleepily, "Are you her father now?"

"No," said Jallot, laughing softly.

"Tell me more," yawned Jérôme; "an' please make 'em find a white horse with pink wings to take 'em rainbow rides, like the lill' boy yo' tol'

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT.

me 'bout dat never threw stones at dogs."

"I'm very sorry, but I cannot do that," said Jallot, giving the boy a hug, "for this is a true story that I'm telling you. The end of it is this: When the ship at last reached New Orleans the little princess was taken away from me, and I never, never saw her again."

The child was very sleepy by this time. He murmured, "You won't let an ogre or nothing take me away, will you, Papoute?"

The barber set Jérôme's mind at rest on that point, and as the boy's head drooped upon his shoulder, he whispered, "Ah, the fairies are dusting their sleepy sand into your eyes, Jérôme." So saying, he began to sing, in a soft baritone voice, a lullaby of his own invention:

When night comes, the slumber fairies,
From some far-off moonlit strand,
Wing their way to drowsy children
Bringing gold and silver sand.
Every grain they bear is laden
With a wond'rous dream and bright;
And with lotus leaves they dust their
Drooping eyelids through the night.

Jérôme slept. Presently Poupet came in and asked in a whisper, "Air yo' at home, Michié? Dere is a lady whad like fo' to see you'."

The woman, whose face was veiled, did not stand upon invitation, but entered at once from

A CRESCENDO OF HYSTERIA

the garden as Jallot transferred Jérôme to the quadroon's arms. He held up a cautioning finger to the intruder and pointed to the sleeping boy, whom Poupet, at his command, carried off to bed.

When they were alone, the barber looked steadfastly for a moment at his visitor. The scarf, which concealed her features, floated over her shoulder, and clung to her graceful figure as though it were a shred of the night mist. In the dim candle-light she seemed to him like a visitant from the spirit world. "Who are you?" he asked, courteously.

With a pretty gesture of abandon she threw back the veil and his amazed eyes beheld the face of Antoinette. Some subtle change had come over those lovely features since he had last looked upon them. They appeared more delicate, more beautiful and suffused with light—the soul of her was there as he had never seen it before. He felt as though he must fall down upon his knees before this saintly vision, a worshiper more than a lover; but lover, too, for there was a storming of cries in his heart, a flood of electric pulsations, tingling to the tips of his fingers; a surging of poignant emotions which stifled utterance, and left him standing there with mute parted lips, only voicing his adoration in a look and the movement of a hand, flung out to her unconsciously.

She thought, "When I die I should like to know

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

that those fingers would close my eyes." Then she spoke, in a tone of nervous tension. "Monsieur, I have come to warn you. Do not stay here another moment."

Jallot, whose eyes never left her face, mechanically asked, "What is the matter?"

"A mob is coming—to attack your atelier."

He stared at her in amazement. "You must be mistaken. What have I done that I should be chosen for such a signal honor, Mademoiselle?"

"You have hung an American flag over your shop."

"What? A flag?" He laughed.

"I have not seen it myself, Monsieur, but I have no doubt it is there, showing brazenly on the street."

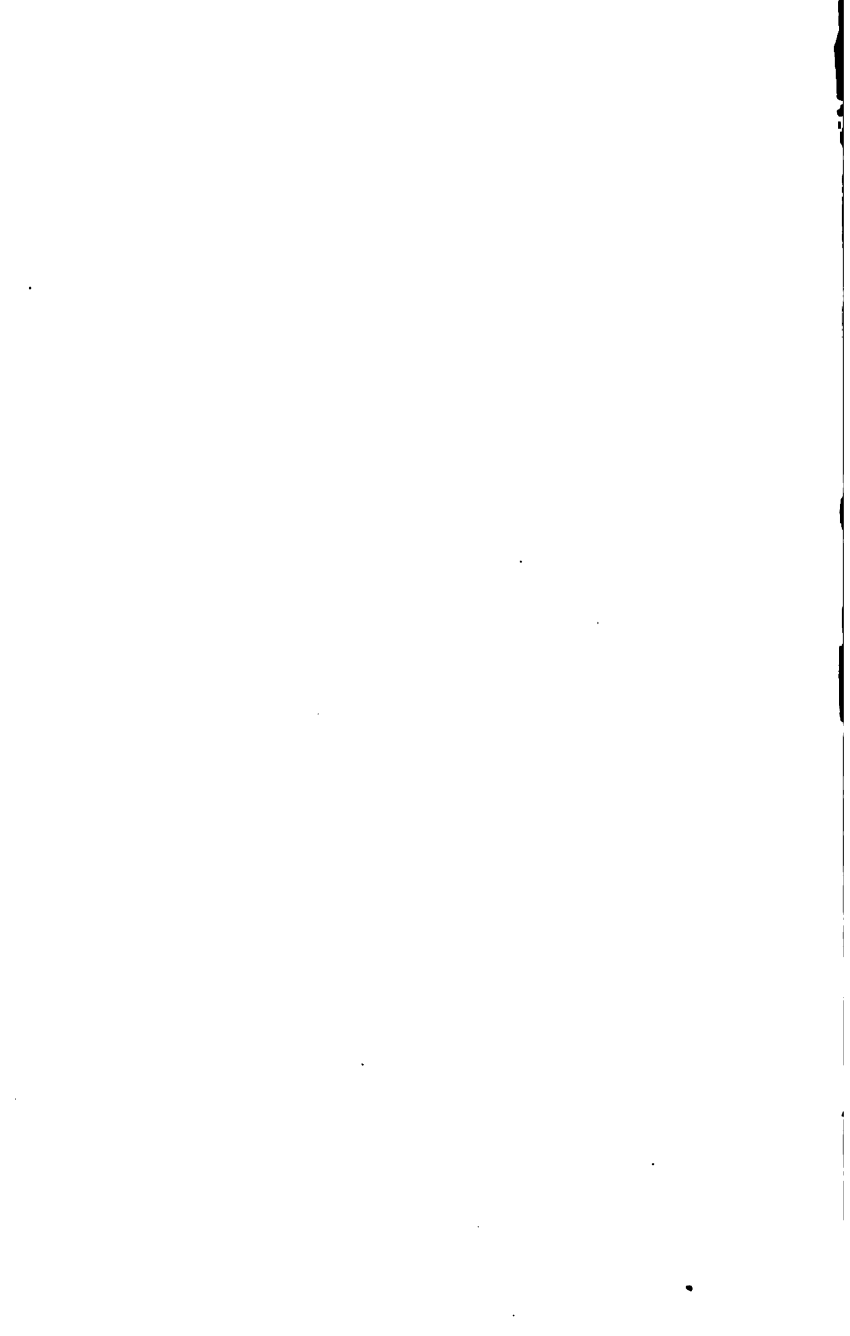
Jallot begged her to excuse him, and hurried across the court to the entrance. She followed him, and there, quite plain now in the moonlight, they saw the banner folding and unfolding in the evening breeze. He puzzled over it for an instant, and then exclaimed: "*Morbleu*, who could have done it?" Then he began to laugh, convinced that it was the work of Jérôme and Poupet, whose secret purchase had never been explained to him.

Antoinette laid a hand on his arm. "Monsieur, this is nothing to laugh about; I beg you to tear down the flag and go."

"I did not put it up, but since it is there—there



"YOU CARED ENOUGH TO COME AT NIGHT—ALONE?"



A CRESCENDO OF HYSTERIA

shall it stay. Come in, Mademoiselle," he continued, bowing her through the arch and following her into the atelier. "Be good enough to tell me what you know of this affair."

"Let me impress upon you, Monsieur, that your life is in jeopardy. My father was passing the Théâtre Saint Pierre, but half an hour ago. He saw a great crowd gathered there, harangued in turn by Monsieur Gazonac and Monsieur Allard—"

"Allard—returned? Are you sure?"

"So my father said. They were urging the people to destroy you for flaunting the American flag over your atelier. Herr Froebel tried to pacify them—they struck him down and beat him. He came home ill—in terror; yet he wished to warn you. I would not let him go—"

Jallot's voice shook as he interjected, "So you came!"

"I—I—there was no one else—to be trusted—with such—an important message," she stammered.

Again, in spite of his efforts to subdue his tone, the words came vibrantly: "You cared enough for me—to come at night—alone?"

Antoinette was standing at one side of a small table, he at the other. A solitary candle burned between them. Its light laid a delicate glow upon their features, and, as Jallot put his question, he could see quite plainly the play of emotion in the

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

woman's face. She turned from him a little before replying, with a faint sign of bitterness, "I am an octoroon—what matters it where I go or when!" Then she added, making a quick transition to softer speech, "I was glad to serve you, Monsieur, and would have—at a greater cost."

"I thank you, Mademoiselle," was all he dared to say in gratitude.

She faced him then. "But you will not go?"

He shook his head. She reflected a moment, and exclaimed: "But that crowd at the Théâtre Saint Pierre will presently become a mob! You know what that means in New Orleans!"

"I shall be ready for them." These were his words, but with his eyes he spoke of tenderer things.

Antoinette did not venture to meet that look but once. Her chin sank into the folds of her veil. Lowering her voice to a murmur, she said, "I came here to-night to warn you—because—because I should grieve if any harm came to you." His silence gave her courage to go on. She raised her head, and in a cadence of infinite solicitude, cried: "Oh, if you have any regard for me—you will stay here no longer."

Jallot leaned across the table toward her. He spoke quiveringly. "Regard, Mademoiselle, is not the word—"

What more he might have said, she could only surmise, for at that moment the court door flung

A CRESCENDO OF HYSTERIA

violently open, and Lemaitre strode into the atelier. He paused for an instant, surprising Antoinette, and stared at her in insolent amusement. Jallot, bristling with resentment at the intrusion, turned from the table with an exclamation of anger.

"No doubt I intrude," began the Creole; "but I shall not detain you long, Monsieur."

"What do you want?" There was a threat in the barber's interrogation.

"That fellow Osbourne!"

"This is not his address!"

"But he receives letters here!"

"That is his affair, not yours, Monsieur Lemaitre. And now, having concluded your business, pray go."

The intruder gave a chuckle and moved leisurely toward the door. There he faced about and bowed, saying with a jeer, "*Bonjour*, Monsieur. I leave you with the woman you have bought."

"*Ciel!*" cried Jallot, his wrath mounting. He sprang at Lemaitre, who slipped out of the atelier and closed the door after him.

Antoinette had stood there all the while, immobile as a statue. Now she made a sudden movement toward Jallot, gasping: "Monsieur, what—what did—he—mean?"

"Nothing—nothing, Mademoiselle," he replied quickly, endeavoring to conceal his agitation.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

Then from the open window came another reply to the girl's question. Lemaitre thrust his head through the casement and laughed: "It means that Delicado offered you for sale, Antoinette! That Jallot bought you at auction! He likes yellow girls!" So saying, he disappeared before the barber could lay hands on him.

Antoinette staggered as under a blow, mute with a horror which flashed upon her understanding with the vividness of lightning, leaving her dazed, bewildered. Noting how faint she was, Jallot hastened to aid her; but, as he touched the girl, she shrank from him in a panic. "No—no—wait!" Her hand clutched at the table for support. "What—is—this terrible thing—he said?" she demanded, the words coming between deep, quavering breaths, each one a cry suppressed. "I know that I am an octoroon," she went on; "but that you—you—bought me! *Dieu!*" This in a crescendo of hysteria, which broke off into sobs and mounted again into a tremolo, as she entreated, "Say that you have not bought me! Oh, Monsieur, it is not true! You could not—would not so humiliate me!" She paused, waiting an instant for a denial, but he made none, only standing there as though convicted of a great guilt. "Why do you not speak?" She trembled in terror. "*Dieu!* Speak, speak, speak!" In a frenzy she held out her arms to him supplicatingly.

"Be calm, Mademoiselle," he implored.

A CRESCENDO OF HYSTERIA

"You have bought me!" It was an accusation pronounced with terrible quietude.

Jallot cringed under it; then ventured this defence: "Mademoiselle—Delicado put you up for sale to the highest bidder—I was obliged—"

"You bought me—bought me—bought me! You beast!" Shame, hatred and desperation made up the sum of that whispered invective.

"I did it to save you from a worse fate," he expostulated.

She laughed horridly and retorted in a fury, "You bought me to be revenged, you mean! Yes—revenged for my rebuffs! You barber! And I thought you a man! Well, you have bought me! What further ignominy must I suffer at your hands?" She whirled to the garden door.

"Mademoiselle," cried Jallot, following her; "the only wrong that I have done has been to love you!"

Antoinette turned upon him with loathing. "Love! Your lips soil the word—" She paused. From afar off, but plainly drawing nearer, they heard a tumultuous murmuring. "They are coming!" This triumphantly. "Stay, Monsieur le Barbier, if you dare!" Her hand went to the door latch, as she added, vindictively, "I hope they will kill you!"

CHAPTER XXVII

ONE MAN AGAINST A HUNDRED

Jallot, unmindful of the mob's approach, stood staring blindly at the door through which Antoinette had disappeared but a moment before. He felt as though something sank within him, producing a strange, sickening sensation. Then he began to wonder how that enchanting visitor, who had come so solicitously to warn him of peril, could be the same creature as the fury who had just now gone from him, displaying such malignity. He had but an instant to ruminate upon this peculiar manifestation of feminine transition, for Poupet burst panic-stricken into the atelier.

"Michié," he shrieked, shutting and bolting the door and hurriedly fastening the window shutters; "it is a dreadful—dey's comin'—a big crowd—a mob—"

"Yes, it sounds like a mob," laconically rejoined the barber, flinging off his coat as he heard the rabble rushing into the court with virulent cries, and calling upon him to come out that they might make an end of him.

"Dey'll kill yo', Michié" whined Poupet, while

ONE MAN AGAINST A HUNDRED

the mob stormed the door and bawled out afresh their imprecations.

Jallot paid no heed to the quadroom or to the clamor without; but fastidiously selected a rapier from the rack and removed its button. Then he leisurely opened the atelier door.

The court was fitfully illuminated with torch and lantern lights, which showed the barber a hundred menacing men or more, packed beneath the arches, climbing over the fountain and swarming up the stairways and across the galleries of the surrounding dwellings, while the windows all about were animated with the frightened faces of his neighbors.

The cries of the rabble, calling for vengeance upon Jallot, ceased abruptly as he appeared. Those who had pressed forward to break in the door fell back in precipitate haste.

"*Bonsoir*, Messieurs," began the barber, saluting the crowd with his sword. "To what do I owe the honor of this visitation?"

Gazonac, who, with Villebois, Lemaitre and Al-lard, stood in the van of the mob, called out lustily, "Don't be frightened by a mountebank!"

"Or a barber," added Lemaitre.

"Or a trick dog!" laughed Villebois.

"Come on then—the pack of you," challenged Jallot.

The murmuring throng fell back again as he advanced.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"Take him! Down with the barber! Break his head!" These encouraging shouts came from Gazonac's party, who thus desperately urged the rank and file to action.

Jallot appealed to the men nearest him. "Send those who urge you first: Gazonac, Villebois, Lemaitre and that snivelling editor!"

Gazonac, not lacking courage, whipped out his long sword from its cane-sheath, and crying, "I'm your man!" sprang impetuously at the barber. Jallot met him gaily, and, as they crossed blades, he remarked:

"Know, Monsieur, when you feel my sword searching your ribs, that I am thinking how you shamed a certain lady at the Tiyoli!"

They had scarcely exchanged a dozen passes, when the barber, with a sudden thrust, so rapid that none saw the play of his steel, ran his opponent through the shoulder, and the conspirator fell back groaning into the arms of Allard.

"That, for Mademoiselle!" exclaimed Jallot, with a placid countenance. And as a threatening mutter went up from the crowd to the accompaniment of hand-claps from the window, he added merrily, after the fashion of a tonsor addressing his customers, "Next! This is an excellent shop in which to get your throat cut!"

"He's the limb of the fiend," ejaculated one of the mob, making way for Allard, who carried

ONE MAN AGAINST A HUNDRED

Gazonac to the fountain, and set about reviving him.

"I've no wish to get my throat cut," exclaimed another, backing further away from the reach of Jallot's rapier.

"Come!" chided the barber. "This is a general challenge. I'll take you each in turn!" He looked about, smiling his invitation. Observing that no one responded, he called out in ridicule, "Ah, your valor is in your tongue!" He waited again for some show of opposition, then resumed with defiance: "If you will not fight—you shall listen to me!"

"Cowards!" stormed Lemaitre, waving his cane frantically at the crowd.

"Fight with him first and listen to him afterwards," jibed Villebois.

Jallot quickly turned to the Creole. "Set them an example yourself, Villebois. Come, step out—you, too, Lemaitre! I'll take you in pairs," he taunted.

"That's fair enough," said a Frenchman, who held a lantern in the front ranks.

The barber nodded graciously. "Oh, I know you gentlemen will see fair play here."

"What's fair play with a traitor like you?" bawled a Spaniard, flaunting a piece of the flag that he had torn down.

"Hear my side of this affair, Messieurs, and—"

"*Sacré!*" interrupted Lemaitre. "His mouth

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

is packed with lies!"

"And your scabbard is packed with boasts, or I should ask you to back your words with steel," retorted the barber.

"Speak, Jallot, we'll hear you," ventured an elderly Creole.

The crowd, at this, signified their willingness to listen, silencing the few who objected.

"Thank you, Messieurs," began Jallot with a noble air, "I know you do not come in malice, as do these gentlemen—who will not fight."

"Traitor to Louisiana!" shouted Lemaitre.

"Will some one hush that jackanapes or shall I?" This from the master, with a flourish of his sword.

There were cries then to put the Creole out and some jostled him roughly.

"If I am a traitor to Louisiana, you may do with me as you will," resumed Jallot, simply.

"Why then have you hung this bastard banner over your door?" demanded the Spaniard, holding aloft his tattered remnant of the flag.

The barber's expression became grave as he replied, "I do not wonder that you put the question to me! I do not blame you because you come to me in hate! You love your State—it's French, blood and bone; and so your loyal hearts must weep to see this strange flag flaunting its stars and stripes, where once floated the tri-color of France."

ONE MAN AGAINST A HUNDRED

The crowd set up a howl, and one shouted that he had named a good reason for their throttling him. Jallot appeared not to heed them. He raised his voice again: "Nor do I blame you for thinking me a traitor since I show above my shop the emblem of this new government—it is only that you do not understand!"

A chorus of yells greeted the speaker; jeers and threats mingling. "We're slaves to this new government! We'll do for those who uphold it!" clamored a man, brandishing a cleaver.

"You've said the word—'slaves!'" continued Jallot, as soon as he could make himself heard. "But that is what you were—not what you are. Your own mother, France, sold you to Spain; Louis gave you to Carlos in secret bargain; and Spain sent you her slave-driver, the Cruel O'Reilly, to govern you. He took the lives of your dearest patriots!—remember the martyred Lafrenière, Noyan, Villere, Marquis, Milhet!—Spain ruined you and flung you back to France again, like some worn-out, despised thing. Did France hear Louisiana, her child, crying to her across the sea? Did France take you to her breast? No! This inhuman mother bartered for your blood again; she abandoned you, put you up at auction in the world's slave market; offered you to the highest bidder for so much gold! And then young, brave, free, sympathetic America took you to her heart—adopted you! This poor,

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT.

bedraggled, outcast Louisiana, found at last—a mother!”

Mumblings of approval came from the crowd, with here and there a shout of enthusiasm and more applause from the windows.

“You confess that what I say is true,” cried Jallot. “Yet you drag her flag in the dust.”

“It’s not our flag!” stubbornly put in the man with the cleaver. “You—”

The barber hushed him with a gesture, and went on, with gathering fervor: “I grant you that France is your land by birth; but America is your country by adoption. France forfeited all your loyalty when she abandoned you; America won it when she embraced you. Her rule will lift you out of commercial ruin; and only as a part of the United States can Louisiana enter upon a great future. Yet you would humble your adopted mother. You listen to the words of a few ungrateful, intriguing men—not Creoles—no!—but foreigners, who have banded themselves together to rend you from America, to supplant her kindly rule with an empire of their own, to cast you back into a state of serfdom more tyrannous than the reign of the Bloody O’Reilly! Will you permit these men to overthrow your adopted mother? Will you let them sow their seeds of civic strife that you may reap a harvest of death?”

For an instant the crowd remained hushed, and then burst into a great shouting. “No, no, no!”

ONE MAN AGAINST A HUNDRED

they cried. A man, standing atop the fountain, called out to Jallot, "Who are these men?"

"Those who sent you here! Gazonac, Villebois, Lemaitre, Allard—and do not forget Delicado!" thundered the barber, carried away by his own enthusiasm.

The effect of Jallot's harangue was magical. It worked a complete transition in the hearts of the rabble. Those who had been loudest in their denunciation, and most eager to wreak vengeance upon him, turned with even greater malignity upon the conspirators; but those adventurers, seeing how the tide was set against them, had slipped away and now ran madly down the street.

The discovery of their escape was signaled by a fresh outburst of demoniac clamor. Those at the entrance called upon those within that their quarry was still in sight, and started in pursuit; while from gallery and stairway the embittered throng, shouting blasphemous threats, came tumbling pell-mell into the court, fighting with one another as in desperate haste they pressed through the narrow passage to join the chase in full cry down the Rue du Maine.

The leaders of the rabble were scarcely a hundred yards behind the fugitives, who were burdened with the wounded Gazonac. Despite that handicap they maintained their distance awhile, since terror lent them speed if not endurance. Pantingly they turned at the quay and ran along

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

the levee, Lemaitre a little way in advance and Gazonac following between the supporting arms of Villebois and Allard. The pack came yelping on as though the chase were sport to them; and their cries, reverberating ominously through the night, attracted the attention of Osbourne, who, failing to find Otilie at home, was hastily returning in the direction of the atelier. His practiced ear told him that the hunt, whatever it was, now headed back to the river, so he cut through the Rue Chartres with the hope of intercepting the quarry. As he reached the Rue Ste. Anne, he caught sight of Gazonac and his companions staggering across the Place d'Armes with the mob but a few yards behind them. In a final desperate rush, they reached the closed portal of the cathedral, where they faced about at bay, their bared swords flashing in the moonlight.

As Osbourne came up, the clamor of the crowd roused the guard from the government house; and there was need of them, for the mob, choring vengeance, fell unhesitatingly upon the conspirators and dragged them from the church steps. It would have gone ill with them if the guard, under the command of Osbourne, had not rallied to their rescue, which was not accomplished without the exchange of hard knocks and the earnest use of steel. Even then, it was a much battered company of adventurers whom the sheriff wrested from the rabble.

ONE MAN AGAINST A HUNDRED

Recognizing those whom he had befriended, Osbourne packed them off to the gaol, directed a surgeon to look to their hurts, and detained them there under strict surveillance as conspirators against the government.

Many of the mob, cheated of their prey, dispersed; but some thirty of them, their savagery unsatisfied, insisted that they should immediately find another victim. One, remembering Jallot's caution not to forget the leader of the conspiracy, bawled out that worthy's name, calling for vengeance upon him; and a tailor, to whom Delicado had refused payment of a debt, volunteered to lead the way to the Spaniard's domicile.

Straight off they marched to the Rue Toulouse, and for fear that so large a body of men should frighten the game away, some few skirmished ahead and knocked quietly at the door of No. 11.

The page, who answered their calls, declared that his master was not at home; but, doubting his word, they seized him, bound his fellow-servants, and, calling to their companions, began to ransack the house. They explored every possible hiding place and left behind them a trail of wanton destruction.

Satisfied at last that Delicado was not concealed about the premises, the rabble determined to await his return. The salon, set out for supper, attracted their attention. They took possession of it, released the servants, and, compelling them

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

to serve up the choicest vintage of the Spaniard's cellar, began a riotous revelry such as the Rue Toulouse had never heard of before.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE BARRIER OF CASTE

Whilst all these brutish episodes disturbed the city's peace, Jallot sought surcease of excitement in the garden of the atelier. Seen through the smoke of his cigarette, it seemed to him the calmest spot in all the world. A light breeze stirred the tops of the Spanish dagger trees and shook free the fragrance of orange and jasmine and roses. Over the high wall, moss-grown and plaster-patched, shone a horn of the new moon. Its beams shot through the shrubbery, picking out first the sun-dial and then the lion's head font, which spilled a tiny stream of silver into a marble bowl.

Jallot rested upon a great stone bench, overhung with a bower of roses, and closed his mind to thought, baring only his senses to the voluptuous night. So still it was that he could hear the silken fall of blossoms and the low whisperings of the sweet-scented airs.

A faint footfall and the riffling sound of a skirt disturbed the silence, and brought him to his feet in amazement. Before him stood Antoinette,

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

bearing a tray laden with an omelette, biscuits and a bottle of wine.

He stared at the apparition, scarcely believing that he did not dream. "What—why—you have returned?" he stammered in his surprise.

"I did not go at all, Monsieur." She spoke in an even tone, as stoical as the expression of her face.

"You—stayed—here—while they stormed—?"

"Yes!" she broke in, meeting his incredulous glance unflinchingly.

He became severe. "You should not have run such a risk—they might have—" He interrupted himself, noting for the first time the tray she carried. "What's that, Mademoiselle?"

"Your supper!" She replied in the most matter of fact tone.

"You fetch my supper—you?" Indignantly he sought to take the waiter from her.

Antoinette backed quickly away from him. "Monsieur, it is right that I should serve you. I am your slave!"

This simple statement was like a shock to Jallot. "*Sacré bleu!* No!" he cried, forcibly taking possession of the tray and setting it on a small table which stood beside the bench.

"You have bought me," she protested quietly.

Jallot winced and looked at her with abject misery. "Every word you speak is like a knife thrust in my heart, Mademoiselle."

THE BARRIER OF CASTE

"You must not call me 'Mademoiselle.' I am 'Antoinette' to you." She spoke placidly, coldly, without any show of the tremendous emotion that she felt.

Never had the girl seemed so far removed from him as then. "What am I to you?" he asked.

"You are 'Sieur Jallot, my master.'" Still there was no resentment in her voice, no color or revelation of her deeply hidden suffering. It seemed to the barber as though he were talking to a white mask. She was inscrutable.

As he stood studying her, she spread a napkin on the table and poured out a glass of wine.

"You shall not wait upon me," he expostulated with some warmth.

Antoinette paused and inquired, "What else should I do? I am your bond-servant."

"You are cruel!"

"I am an octoroon!"

"Mademoiselle—" It was a broken remonstrance.

"My name is Antoinette."

Nothing had ever seemed so terrible to Jallot as the persistence with which she maintained that stoical demeanor. It frightened him. When he spoke again it was with humility and tenderness. "Antoinette, be merciful! Treat me as your equal! Here—" He waved his hand toward the bench—"sit down; we'll talk it over—as—as friends."

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

She was not to be moved by entreaty. She was determined that the misery, which she fancied he had inflicted upon her, should be visited upon him with interest. "A slave must not sit with her master."

The barber, whose actions had been directed entirely by his emotion, now made a demand upon his mind for assistance, and his brain dictated peremptory measures. "Very well, Antoinette, if you will have it so, you shall obey me. Sit down!"

His command aroused her spirit. "I will not," she declared.

"If you do not obey me," he went on, threateningly, "I shall sell you to a master who will treat you more brutally than I know how."

"You shall never do that," she cried, snatching a knife from the tray and holding it irresolutely to her breast.

"Antoinette, will you put down that knife?" He asked this gently. Then as she hesitated to comply, he thundered, "Put it down!"

Shocked at his vehemence, she obeyed.

"Now be seated, Antoinette." Again he was gentle and again she demurred. "Be seated!" he roared.

She sank trembling on the bench, while he moved the table in front of her and bade her taste the omelette.

"I—I cannot." Antoinette was on the verge of tears.

THE BARRIER OF CASTE

"You shall obey me!"

She began to sob a little. "You—you treat me as though I—I were your—slave." She lifted her eyes, brimming with tears, which the magic moonlight at once transformed into gems. "Oh, Monsieur, you do believe it—that I am an octoroon. You have bought me—bought me—to do with me as you will."

Jallot took a bit of parchment from his pocket, stamped with a red seal, and offered it to her. "Mademoiselle, I set you free—here are your freedom papers."

Antoinette arose and took the document, looking at it blindly and in silence. At last she asked piteously, "But what am I to do—with my freedom? If I am an octoroon my friends will not know me—every door will be closed against me—I will be an outcast—" She paused, shivering and irresolute for an instant. A faint color suffused her wan cheeks and her lips quivered. "Ah, it would be almost better that I should stay here—your slave." Another pause, and she added with ineffable pathos, "At least you would not harm me."

He held out his arms to her in a tumult of emotion. "Mademoiselle, you shall stay here—my wife!"

The girl's eyes widened and glowed with wondrous gratitude. "Bless you for those words, Victor Jallot." As she gave him her hand im-

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

petuously, Caresse, seeking her, came from the atelier.

"Honey," drawled the *bonne*, "Ah reckon yo' beddah come home wid me." She gave Jallot a look of contempt and went on in a severe tone. "Yo' aind got no bizness wid dat pusson."

"I have asked Mademoiselle to marry me," said the barber.

Caresse gaped at him, thoroughly disconcerted. "De good Lord fo'give me fo' tinkin' wrong o' yo', Missou. Yo' mighty noble gen'l'man; but if dis yeh chile am a yeller gal, she can't be no wife t' yo', fo' de law won't led no whide man marry a pusson o' color."

Antoinette started back from Jallot with a faint cry, and sank down on the bench, her face in her hands.

Caresse continued. "An' if she am whide, den she too much quality fo' you, Missou."

"Men are what they make of themselves, or should be," protested the barber; "but if the world will only measure us by our birth, let me say a thing which I have never said, much less boasted of; though I am not of noble blood—my father owned an honored name in France. He was Miomandre de Sainte-Marie, of the Queen's body guard."

Antoinette looked up in wonderment. "Sainte-Marie?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle—you will find his name

THE BARRIER OF CASTE

upon one resplendent page of history. That fearful night when the Paris horde, spurred with hunger, drink and hate, stormed the palace at Versailles—my father held the stair alone—one man against hundreds. While Lafayette slept, while princes fled, leaving their king and queen to a dreadful fate—Sainte-Marie kept that weaponed mob at bay—his single body, his single sword between them and his sovereigns' lives."

"A brave soldier! A gallant gentleman!" declared Antoinette rising. Then she asked in a low voice, "He was killed there?"

"No, Mademoiselle, he lived to die of his wounds in Flanders—whither his gracious queen bade him go in exile."

"And your mother?"

"The daughter of an English painter—she followed my father into banishment; and when he was gone, took ship with me to America." Jallot advanced a step toward Antoinette, and added, "Mademoiselle, I ask you to take the name of Victor Jallot Sainte-Marie."

"Yo' fo'get dat law, Missou," interposed Caresse.

"I dare to break it!" The barber looked earnestly at Antoinette.

She made a gesture of abnegation. "No, no, Monsieur, you shall not—for me! The son of Miomandre de Sainte-Marie cannot marry an octoroon." Her head dropped. She turned away.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"He can—if she will!" It was both a challenge and an appeal. It all but overcame her hasty resolution to save him from the shame she thought must fall on him should he dare to link his fate with hers.

"No—no—it cannot be!" cried the girl, moving swiftly toward the garden door.

Jallot followed her. "Remember that I love you, Mademoiselle; that I am here waiting for you; that I shall be waiting, waiting for you, hoping that at last you will come and say to me, 'I am here—I do not care for that law—take me away.' "

Then, if he had only understood, she rendered him the testimony of her love, for the spell of self-sacrifice was strong upon her. She coined it in the metal of a lie: "I do not love you—I shall never come—never!—because I do not love you!"

She was gone, leaving Jallot with the spectre of love to haunt and torture him.

CHAPTER. XXIX

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

Jallot fled from the garden—fled from the ghost of love, which seemed a part of every shadow there. Its sightless form was clothed in the fragrance of jasmine, its soundless voice was wailing with the night's fearful silences. He shut the atelier door against the spectre and flung himself into the barber chair. All his bravery deserted him, and he drained deep the crippling cup of despondency.

Presently he felt a hand upon his shoulder. Looking up, he met the sympathetic, inquiring glance of Osbourne.

"She—has been here and—gone!" Jallot spoke in a monotone of infinite misery.

"Antoinette?"

"Yes!"

"She knows that you—bought her?"

The barber gave an affirmative nod. "She has her freedom—she does not care for me—she has gone. It—is—the—end."

"That does not sound like you, Jallot!"

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"What more can you expect of me?"—this listlessly.

"Only that you should live up to your code."

"My code? I have none!"

"How poorly you know yourself." Again Osbourne laid his hand on the barber's shoulder. "I have seen you in many critical moments—times when other men would have yielded, overcome with the great obstacles confronting them; but that could never have been said of you till now. Always—unconsciously perhaps—you have said, 'What must be done—can be done!' And that simple phrase—your brave code—has been a law ruling your inclination and shining through your whole life. It has been your call to arms, your battle-cry, mustering your courage to wrest success from defeat. Because you have failed to-night, do not think it is the end. What is more, you have no right to pause until you have proved Antoinette white! God, man, look up! I give you back your own code, 'What must be done—can be done!'"

Jallot responded to this impassioned plea. He sprang up and gripped Osbourne's hand. "Thanks, thanks for your words, old friend. I did not know that I had a code, but since I have—I will live up to it."

They sat down together on the window seat.

"I was thinking about Antoinette as I came here to-night," resumed Osbourne. "She is about

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

nineteen now. It is twelve years since Delicado gave her in trust to Froebel. Twelve from nineteen leaves seven. You see she must have been very young when she first fell into the Spaniard's hands—perhaps four or five."

"Excellent computation, but where does it lead us?"

"Somewhere near the year 1790, when she was five years old."

"The year I came to New Orleans—"

"A refugee from France," supplemented the American; "and yours was not the only ship laden with fugitives from the terror of the Revolution. Many of them, like you, were sold here as redemptioners."

Jallot grasped his companion's arm. "*Nom de Dieu!* A redemptioner! . . . Yes, it is possible that she might have been . . ." His enthusiasm ebbed as he added, "But she was a slave."

"There have been cases where whites—taken as redemptioners when young—have, through their ignorance and the villainy of their masters, been held as slaves and called octoroons."

"*Ciel!*" cried Jallot, excitedly.

"Take that as your clue and work from it."

"Delicado called her Margot," mused the barber. Then he breathlessly supplemented, "Margot is the contraction for Marguerite! Why did I not think of that before!" He was on his feet. "I have a clue! . . . No, no! It is too wild a hope!

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

... Yet stranger things . . . " He paced the floor in nervous abstraction. "What o'clock is it?"

"About nine," answered Osbourne, looking at his watch.

"Only nine! I have an engagement with Delicado at ten. *Ma foi!* What an idiot I am. He may have taken alarm." Jallot's thought was that the conspirators, escaping the mob, must certainly seek out the Spaniard and impart to him the manner in which their plot had been betrayed. The barber communicated his fears to Osbourne, and told him of the night's adventure.

"You can rest easy on that score," laughed the American, and went on to relate how he had effected the capture of Gazonac and his companions at the Place d' Armes.

"Admirable, Monsieur Sheriff," approved the other. "We have finished off the conspiracy, and perhaps Delicado does not know that his compatriots have been arrested. I'll try his house at ten. If he is not there, we must find him wherever he is to-night. He must be made to speak." Jallot paused a moment in thought. "I should have some records. Wait! I'll look for them." He went into his cabinet.

During his absence, Ottilie and her maid came to the atelier, and Poupet, who admitted them, almost swooned with joy when he saw Tonton wearing a red rose in her hair. He signalled the girl away into the garden, leaving her mistress to

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

the sheriff's care.

"Monsieur Osbourne," exclaimed Otilie, with agitation, "I did not think to find you here. I have stolen out of the house at great peril. I have just heard that Monsieur Jallot has—bought Antoinette. I could not wait—I came to learn—the truth from him. Oh, it is terrible!"

"It might be much worse, Mademoiselle. Jallot has saved her from even greater ignominy."

"Where is he?"

"He will be here presently."

"What—what is he going to do?"

"He has set her free."

Otilie dropped into a chair with a sigh of relief. "I might have known that Monsieur Jallot would act nobly. - Poor Antoinette!"

Osbourne gazed with open admiration upon the lovely face of the Creole girl. Presently he spoke. "I called at your house early this evening, Mademoiselle. You were not at home. Just now I was thinking of you—I meant to reply to your note in person."

"It required no answer," she returned. "It was merely to warn you."

"Was that all it meant?"

"Oh, you read something else into it?"

He became confused. "I—I confess I should never have thought of it—only Jallot—"

"Pointed it out to you?"

"Precisely!"

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"And what was your discovery?" There was a faint note of resentment in her voice which Osbourne failed to detect.

"He—he may have invented it—simply to encourage me."

"Oh, you were—eh—discouraged?"

"I was not hopeful, Mademoiselle."

"And now—?"

"I scarcely know what to think," he ventured.

Ottillie sprang up angrily. "I will tell you then what I think! It was horrid of you to show him my note."

The American went on to incriminate himself. "But there was nothing in it that—"

"Monsieur Jallot found something! What was it?" Her question was a trap.

Osbourne stepped into it. "Eh—er—only that he thought it meant that—eh—you—perhaps—cared for me."

The Creole girl laughed derisively at this. "So you and Monsieur Jallot have settled it between you that I care for you! How droll!"

Jallot, opening the cabinet door, heard this remark and paused on the threshold, as Osbourne, overwhelmed with chagrin, rejoined, "Oh, laugh at me. I am stupid. I was a fool to think that he might be right. Well, I shall not annoy you again, Mademoiselle." He turned away, while she shrugged her shoulders indifferently.

The barber, affecting great haste and import-

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

ance, stepped into the atelier and addressed the sheriff. "Monsieur, you have but a moment to decide. If you accept the governor's commission you must sail for France to-night—"

Osbourne stared at the speaker stupidly, and Otilie wheeled about with sudden interest and concern.

"It is unexpected, I know," continued Jallot rapidly; "but new developments have hastened the ship's departure. The Governor's messenger is waiting—"

"But I—"

The barber cut him off, appealing to the girl. "Mademoiselle, urge him to accept this splendid offer to leave Louisiana forever."

Otilie colored, stammering, "I—I will not!" She was prettily emphatic.

"What does—?"

Again Jallot forestalled Osbourne's question. "Monsieur, do not let this great opportunity escape you."

"You must not listen to him," protested the Creole girl timorously.

"But—" interjected the American in confusion.

"No buts—it is your duty to accept the commission," insisted Jallot.

Otilie was now thoroughly alarmed. "What do I care for his duty," she cried.

"I—I—do—"

The barber snapped his friend up again. "Of

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

course you do—you're a man; you will not permit a woman to weaken your purpose."

"He will stay if I ask him!" Otilie defied one man and appealed to the other, who, marveling at this manifestation of her regard for him, kept silent.

Jallot taunted her. "So you think, Mademoiselle, that your love for him will outweigh his sense of duty?"

Otilie hesitated but a moment, and then declared courageously, "I—I do!" She put her arm through Osbourne's with an enchanting air of confidence, while he, in happy bewilderment, drew her closer to him.

"Then, that is final," announced the barber. "I will send the messenger back." He turned away from them and addressed space as though a page stood waiting at the door: "Monsieur, report to the governor that the sheriff of Louisiana declines with thanks the commission, owing to the fact that Mademoiselle Trudeau has confessed that she loves him."

It was an instant before the lovers fully realized how they had been duped. Otilie was the first to speak. "What?" she ejaculated, dropping her head in confusion. "A hoax!"

Jallot bowed. "Which was successful, thanks to Monsieur's dear stupidity and Mademoiselle's dearer affection. Bless me, my children, for showing you the swift route to happiness."

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

"I do, Jallot," beamed the American.

"I shall never forgive you," gasped the girl, and added, smilingly, "Monsieur, you are the most superb liar that I have ever known."

"But the Recording Angel has a way of stopping her ears when we lie in the service of love, Mademoiselle." The barber laid a hand over his heart and bowed again.

Ottillie touched his shoulder with her fingertips. "You have served love nobly; see that you serve Antoinette as well. Oh, do not stop at setting her free!"

"I shall stop at nothing until I prove her to be as white as you are, Mademoiselle."

Something in the tone of Jallot's voice made her feel that he could not fail. She smiled her confidence, and, at the same time, tears came into her eyes unbidden, thinking of the happiness he had found for her.

The girl's thought seemed to be communicated to Osbourne. "I owe you my happiness!" he said to Jallot.

"See that you deserve it," responded the barber. "Go now, and when you have seen Mademoiselle to her house, be good enough to return here, for I shall have need of you to-night." He showed them out through the garden, and then, turning back to the atelier, encountered Poupet with Tonton tucked under his arm.

"Michié," grinned the quadroon, very much

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

embarrassed. "Ah—Ah jus' get betroth' t' dese lady."

"There must be contagion in the night," commented Jallot, half in jest and half in bitterness.

Tonton, perfectly self-possessed, made this explanation: "Poupet get de shop, so Ah got t' take care him now."

"Yo' tink Ah make preddy good prattycable match, *hein*, Michié?" Poupet stood first on one foot and then on the other, awaiting his patron's approbation.

"You have fallen into capable hands," smiled Jallot. "I congratulate you both. Return him to me in a half hour, Tonton. *Bonsoir, mes enfants!*"

Dismissing them, he looked at his watch. Its hands pointed to half-past nine. He went into the atelier for his hat and cane, with the intention of setting out in a few minutes to keep his rendezvous with Delicado.

CHAPTER XXX

THEY AND THE NIGHT

Meanwhile Delicado, ignorant of the arrest of his fellow conspirators, was returning leisurely from the Tivoli, where he had dined tête-à-tête with the Marquis Casa Calvo. As he turned into the Rue Toulouse he was much amazed to hear boisterous sounds of revelry emanating from his own house. But he was more astonished, in fact he was frightened, when he pushed open the door of his salon and saw a rioting band of shopkeepers and slave dealers, foreign habitués of the low cabarets and the riff-raff of the river front—all making free with his wines and brawling across his damask table cloth.

He had no time to consider what should be done. That was decided for him by the tailor, who, catching sight of the Spaniard at the door, called out, "There's the traitor," and flung a decanter at him. This was the brief prologue to a satanic roar, which went up from the rabble as they overturned chairs and table in their eagerness to seize Delicado. He fled and they followed vociferously.

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

At a furious rate he led them out of the Rue Toulouse to the Rue Bourbon. Then he doubled back, by way of the Rue St. Pierre, to the levee, nimbly footing it along the embankment and dodging into the Rue de l'Arsenal. He was surprised there by a few of the more adventurous spirits, who had taken a short cut through the Rue Chartres to intercept his flight.

Desperately Delicado hurtled through their opposing ranks, battering his way with cane and fist, just in time to escape the greater throng that came whooping from the quay. Hard pressed, he spurted away; but the exertion taxed his wind, and he found himself fagged, while the pursuit, still agile, tracked him relentlessly. He knew then that he must fall into their hands unless some fortuitous means of escape presented itself. Accordingly he began looking for some place where he might hide until the mob should rush by. As he stumbled around the corner of the Rue St. Philippe and the Rue Chartres, he noted a high wall, over which hung a jasmine vine within easy reach. He looked behind him. There was no one in view, but he could hear his pursuers hallooing down the Rue St. Philippe.

Hesitating only for an instant, he clutched the vine and swung himself, with painful effort, to the top of the wall. From that high perch he peered into an old garden, apparently deserted. Panting and all unnerved, he dropped heavily upon a

THEY AND THE NIGHT

flower bed; and as he stood listening to the sounds of the chase, he felt himself caught from behind. Strong hands closed about his neck and threw him roughly against a sundial.

Just then the clouds, which had cast a deep shadow over the garden, cleared the face of the moon and her beams fell upon the features of the man who was throttling him.

"Jallot!" gasped Delicado, recognizing the barber in whose garden he had sought refuge.

"Yes, Jallot! and without comes the pack! How does it feel to be hunted?"

"Extremely disagreeable," confessed the Spaniard, laughing silently. He did not know any reason why he should fear his captor. "Kindly give me leave to breathe, Señor."

"That is more than they will do—when I give you up to them."

Delicado's feelings were divided between surprise and alarm, but he put on an easy disposition, saying: "Señor, you will not do that?"

"Such is my purpose—unless you can tell me the truth." The barber gripped the other's throat more tightly by way of being emphatic.

"The truth is readily told," panted the Castilian with all the nonchalance he could assume. "I promise you that, or anything you wish, Señor, if you will not betray me."

"Anything will not answer. I want facts—

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

about Antoinette Froebel—the girl you called Margot—held as a slave.”

It sounded to them as though the mob were drawing nearer.

Delicado, in spite of himself, trembled a trifle as he exclaimed: “Yes, there is no doubt—she was a slave.”

“Is she white?” demanded Jallot. His captive demurred. “Speak! Is she white?”

A fraction of a minute more and Delicado would probably never have spoken again, for those flexible fingers of the barber pressed, like a tightening noose, about his throat. He thought of nothing then but to save himself. “Y-e-s,” he gasped, “she is white.”

“Ah!” It was an exclamation of triumph. “How did you come by her?—quickly!”

“She was a redemptioner—my agent bought her.”

“When?”

“I—I cannot remember—”

“You must—”

The whooping of the mob became more distinct. The Spaniard replied in a whisper: “About fifteen years ago.”

“Where?”

“Here—in New Orleans—there was a great shipload of them—”

“The name of the ship?” Jallot spoke sharply, still keeping a firm hold upon the Spaniard’s

THEY AND THE NIGHT

throat.

"I—I do not recall it."

"Was it 'The Seagull'?" The barber was testing his veracity.

"No!"

"'The Golden Hope'?"

"Yes, yes, Señor—that was the name."

"Marguerite!" ejaculated Jallot with emotion; and added, "You must write that down."

"I dare not—it would mean life imprisonment for me."

"It will mean instant death for you if you do not," threatened the barber.

The cries of the mob burst out with renewed vehemence. The chase was rounding into the Rue Chartres. Then it was that the Spaniard shuddered and plainly uncovered the craven, which he had kept hidden under a debonair manner.

"There they go," whispered Jallot. "A word from me and you will be torn to pieces."

Delicado hastened to give his trembling assent. The barber pushed him into the atelier, and thrust a pen in his hand.

"What shall I write?" The man was completely cowed.

"This," and Jallot began to dictate: "I, Luiz Delicado, do solemnly swear that the woman, known as Antoinette Froebel, is white; that I purchased her as a redemptioner from the ship, 'The

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

Golden Hope,' in 1790, and thereafter unlawfully held her as a slave under the name of Margot, until 1793, when I placed her in trust with Ludwig Froebel; that she is the person I claimed from him on the seventeenth of June and sold at auction on that date to Victor Jallot.... Have you set that down?"

"Yes!"

"Sign it!"

Poupet came into the atelier. Without turning his eyes from the Spaniard, Jallot asked: "Is that you, Poupet?"

"Yes, Michié!"

"Witness this document."

Delicado handed the paper to the barber, who looked at it and laid it on the table.

The rabble had swept by, but still the men in the quiet shop heard the hue and cry, vaunting through the distant streets.

As Poupet sat down to witness the confession, Delicado sprang suddenly to the sword rack, and, seizing a rapier, turned viciously upon Jallot, who threw out a hand in defense, receiving a wound in the forearm. Poupet cried out in alarm and the barber, dodging about the table, avoided another thrust and armed himself with a foil. Tearing off the button, he met the attack of the Spaniard, who soon proved himself an admirable swordsman. They fought

THEY AND THE NIGHT

furiously but quietly, while the quadroon looked on in fearful fascination.

At last Jallot pressed Delicado into a corner, where the Castilian made a desperate lunge, crying: "I shall serve you out with the thrust of Planton!"

"Take the thrust of Jallot," countered the barber, disarming his adversary and pinning him against the wall.

As he held Delicado there, Osbourne opened the door and seeing him, Poupet shouted: "Help, Michié!"

In a moment the sheriff had securely bound the Spaniard's hands. "Now," said he to the conspirator, "we have some questions to put to you."

"You need not bother," smiled Jallot, "I already have what I want of the gentleman. Take him away with you to join his compatriots." Then he turned to Poupet. "Have you witnessed the document?"

"No, Michié!"

"Do so at once and go with Monsieur Osbourne—he'll need you." Jallot took the paper from his assistant and addressed the American. "You had best go through the garden."

On their way out, Delicado jeeringly remarked to the barber: "If I ever have leisure, Señor, I shall ask you to teach me the thrust of Jallot."

"And I shall be glad to oblige you—when you have the leisure."

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

Jallot closed the garden door after the Spaniard and his escort, and, with a sigh, leaned wearily against it, his hand to his arm. "That sword struck deeper than I thought," he murmured, charging his low spirits to his wound; but the truth was that the intelligence he had gained of Delicado gave him greater pain.

He had no doubt now that Antoinette was the Princess Marguerite and his first feeling of happiness and triumph for her, gave way to despondency for himself, believing that he must set the girl up so high that she would be far beyond his reach.

"Ah, Fate, you cheater, you mocker," he apostrophized the night. "You led me to the bright threshold of that house I builded in my dreams, bade me look within upon the face of her who might have kept that hearth for me; and now you say I can not enter there!...." A step or two took him to the sun dial. Again his thoughts shaped themselves into words: "Antoinette, my little white princess, hear me!—you, who once came skipping to my arms with pretty laughter—you, who had no pillow but my shoulder—hear me!.... Oh, best beloved, my soul cries vainly through the dark to you!.... Antoinette, Ludwig, Jérôme, Otilie and Osbourne, and even Tonton and Poupet—I shall have set all your hearts a-singing; your happiness shall be of my making! Yet I, who have done for all, must fail in doing

THEY AND THE NIGHT

for myself! . . . What folly to have ever hoped! . . . Well, Jallot, the woman has come and the woman has gone. . . . I thought to master Fate—what vanity! Montaigne is right, we do not go—we are driven by the current like things that float. . . . Where? Shall I become a crusty old bachelor, a musty scribbler, growing mean and warped, losing the vision of my heart? . . . No, no, Jallot! You have looked into love's dear face, you have felt the tender touch of love's hands, you have breathed the sweet incense of love's presence. . . . You have known the great unknown—the secret spring of life!"

He sank down on the bench beneath the roses, half fainting. Presently he drew a packet, yellow with age, from his shirt and looked at it, thinking of the woman who had placed it in his hands as she lay dying in the cabin of "The Golden Hope." He broke the seal and discovered a bit of parchment and a small case of mouldy leather.

"This should be a miniature of Antoinette's mother," he mused, opening the case and holding it so that the light, shining from the atelier window, fell upon the picture. "*Dieu!*" he exclaimed, awed and amazed. "Antoinette! Antoinette! Her eyes, her hair, even the dear curl of her lips. . . . and all the while I held this proof—forgotten!"

He gazed at it long and lovingly. At last he laid it down beside him and examined the document. "My mother's hand—her mother's words!"

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

His wound, bleeding unstaunched, had weakened him. "Faded?" he muttered, faintly, "or—can—I—no—longer—see? The—ship—Golden—Hope . . . Marguerite . . . Princess" The words shaded off brokenly. With a moan he sank back upon the bench.

Then he seemed to hear a distant sound of knocking and made an effort to rouse himself, only to fall into a swoon.

That summons was at the court door of the atelier. There stood Antoinette alone, waiting the answer. When she had forced herself to flee the garden that night under the compelling spirit of self-sacrifice, she had hastened to the little house in the Rue Bienville whither old Froebel's misfortunes had carried her. The passion of martyrdom sustained for the time her determination never to see Jallot again; but finding her foster-father so far recovered from his hurts as no longer to require her presence at his side, she returned to the lonely seclusion of her boudoir and there her unbidden thoughts leaped back to the garden. Again the barber pleaded his cause, his eloquent hands held out to her beseechingly, his vibrant voice ringing persuasively in her ears.

Perhaps in some clairvoyant fashion she did hear him crying out to her through the dark. Certainly her mind's eyes comprehended with vividness his agony. This visualizing of his distress began a subtle undermining of her purpose, until

THEY AND THE NIGHT

pity for the man added its potent plea, entreating her mercy for the heart that she had exiled from companionship with hers. She presently felt a great longing to go to him, and she fluctuated between the old determination to remain a stranger to him, and the new desire to seek him out again. The white cross of self-sacrifice, which she had born at first with fortitude, now grew heavy to her back. At last its weight became intolerable. She flung it off with no thought of consequence, and as in a dream, found herself in the street shuddering at the night's thick shadows.

Utterly without thought, pushed on only by the impulses of fear, desire, hope—impelled by a sense which obliterated all other ideas from her mind, taking flight by an instinct, like the carrier dove—she sped through the darkened way, nor stopped until she reached the door of the atelier.

She knocked and knocked again and called, but roused no answer. Still she felt that some one was within since she saw, leaking through the chinks of fastened door and shutters, the rays of a candle's light. Distraught, she remembered the garden entrance, and hurrying there, found to her great joy that its gate yielded to the pressure of her hand. She paused for breath, awed by the silence of the place, which seemed to her full of mystery and enchantment under the spectral sheen of the moon.

There it was—only half an hour before—that

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

she had renounced love and shouldered the cross of abnegation with a sad sort of valor. Now she had returned and why? The question made her pause once more. What did she mean? What puff of vacillation had blown her fragile bark into this self-proscribed haven? What breath of instability now inclined her to veer away again? A panic seized her and she must have fled, but that a sigh fell quivering upon her ears.

It was as startling to her as would have been a moan in a silent church. She advanced a trepid step and saw, where the studio light fell aslant a sculptured seat, the form of Jallot half reclining as in sleep. She stared timorously at his pale countenance and then cried out in dread, seeing a crimson stain upon his sleeve.

"Oh, Monsieur," quavered the girl, sinking on her knees beside the silent figure. "There is blood upon your hands! . . . Are you dead?" . . . Then as he kept still, she moaned: "Oh, if you are, you shall be buried in my heart." She laid her hand on his wrist. He did not move at her gentle touch. "Ah,"—this with relief—"your pulse flutters . . . but suppose you should die and never know that I really love you . . . die, believing my horrid lie and with your heart's wounds unhealed! . . . Oh, dearest, nothing matters but love and I bring you mine . . . I will be your slave . . . I do not want my freedom!"

Antoinette took the paper from her breast, tore

THEY AND THE NIGHT

it across and threw it away. "I am your slave now! . . . Come back to me! . . . Oh, wake, Victor! . . . Once you said that my voice was full of magic. I have lost that magic or else you would hear me now! . . . Wake, dearest, and forgive me! . . . It is Antoinette who calls! . . . If your dear name were even whispered in my dead ear it would summon my soul back from paradise!"

Jallot sighed again.

"You live! You live!" The girl's joy was tempered with fear, because she now doubted afresh that she could bring him back to her. She sprang up, calling, "Poupet! Poupet!" The reply was only the echo of her voice.

"What am I to do?" she despaired, wringing her hands. Her uncertainty vanished as she looked about and saw the fountain. She darted to it, wet her handkerchief, and bathed Jallot's forehead; then, tearing his sleeve, bound up the wounded arm, all the while speaking pleadingly to him in the tenderest of accents. "You are coming back to me! Yes! yes! yes. Please wake and forgive me! I love you. Do you hear that, or is your soul so far astray that even words of loving cannot find it? . . . I will not believe that! . . . You have heard and are returning as swiftly as your weary, wounded soul can journey. . . . Hasten, dearest. . . . I love you! . . . You have not ceased to love me? . . . I am shut out by all the world, but your heart is still open to me. . . .

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

That is what I am waiting for you to tell me. . . . I want you to say—a thousand times—that you love me and for every vow of yours I promise in return a hundred fold. . . . Oh, Victor, I love you, I love you, I love you.”

These tender, impassioned words seemed to summon his spirit from that strange place where it had strayed. His lips moved. “An-toi-nette!” His voice sounding faintly as from afar off.

The girl clasped her hands in ecstasy. “Oh, you are coming back,” she whispered. “You hear me now? It is I, Antoinette!”

Jallot opened his eyes and murmured, “Antoinette. . . .my little white princess!”

“Yes, yes, Antoinette! I have come back to you; you have come back to me. I do not care for that law—take me away.” He looked at her in bewilderment. “Don’t you remember?—please! I am your slave!” This, with a little smile.

“You are Princess Marguerite Yolande—”

Antoinette trembled, fearing that his mind had lost its reckoning. “Oh, Victor, return from where you are! I am not a princess! I am only Antoinette, your slave!”

He roused himself, gasping: “No, no, Made-moiselle—here!—here!” He touched the parchment, the miniature. “Look!—read!—you are white!—white!”

“White?” Antoinette in a daze studied the

THEY AND THE NIGHT

document and gazed at the portrait of her mother.

"You are the little princess, Marguerite! See—that miniature—your mother—she lives again in you, lovelier than ever, Mademoiselle."

Antoinette stared at parchment and picture, trying to comprehend their significance. "A princess? . . . This was my mother?"

"Yes, yes! Can't you remember?" Jallot wearily entreated. "Oh, Mademoiselle, look upon that dear face! Holds it no memory for you?"

"This was my mother!" For a moment she pondered and then suddenly asked: "A great ship—?"

"You do remember," he encouraged.

"It seems like a dream—so vague—yet I think I recall one—whose face—like this—but pale—"

"Your mother! Can you remember nothing else?"

Antoinette fixed her eyes insensibly upon the distant leagues of darkness, searching her bewildered soul. At last she ventured, "Was there a boy—a boy who used to bear me on his back?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle," he returned eagerly, "It was I."

"You?" she cried, looking at him intently; "you—that boy?"

He nodded. "You must remember how we played together. How you used to sleep in my arms. How I tried to father you, until the ship came to port in New Orleans, and they took you

THE CODE OF VICTOR JALLOT

away from me—sold you!”

“Oh, oh, that I do remember,” she exclaimed, with a flutter of fear in her eyes. “The Spaniard! *Dieu!* . . . Yes, yes! . . . He was cruel! . . . Beat me! Oh, I remember now. . . . It was he whom I saw at the Tivoli! He used to twist my arm until I fainted. . . . I must have had some vague recollection of him then the terror he inspired. . . .” She caught Jallot’s hand, in a fever of alarm. “But you will not let him take me again?”

The barber smiled wistfully. “You are beyond his reach now, Mademoiselle, as you are—beyond—mine.”

“No—no!”

He pointed to the parchment, saying: “You are Marguerite Yolande of the Guiches, daughter of Prince Henri Louis de Guiche—I am only Victor Jallot Sainte-Marie; and even the son of a brave soldier may not raise his eyes in love to a princess of France.”

Antoinette’s face became suffused with a glorious light. She reached above her head and, plucking a great rose, said, with fond imperiousness: “I, Marguerite Yolande de Guiche, daughter of Prince Henri Louis de Guiche—in the name of my sire and myself—bestow upon thee, ’Sieur Victor Jallot Sainte-Marie, the noblest and oldest order the world has ever known—the Order of Love, which I place over the heart that I have



“I BESTOW UPON THEE THE NOBLEST AND OLDEST ORDER”



THEY AND THE NIGHT

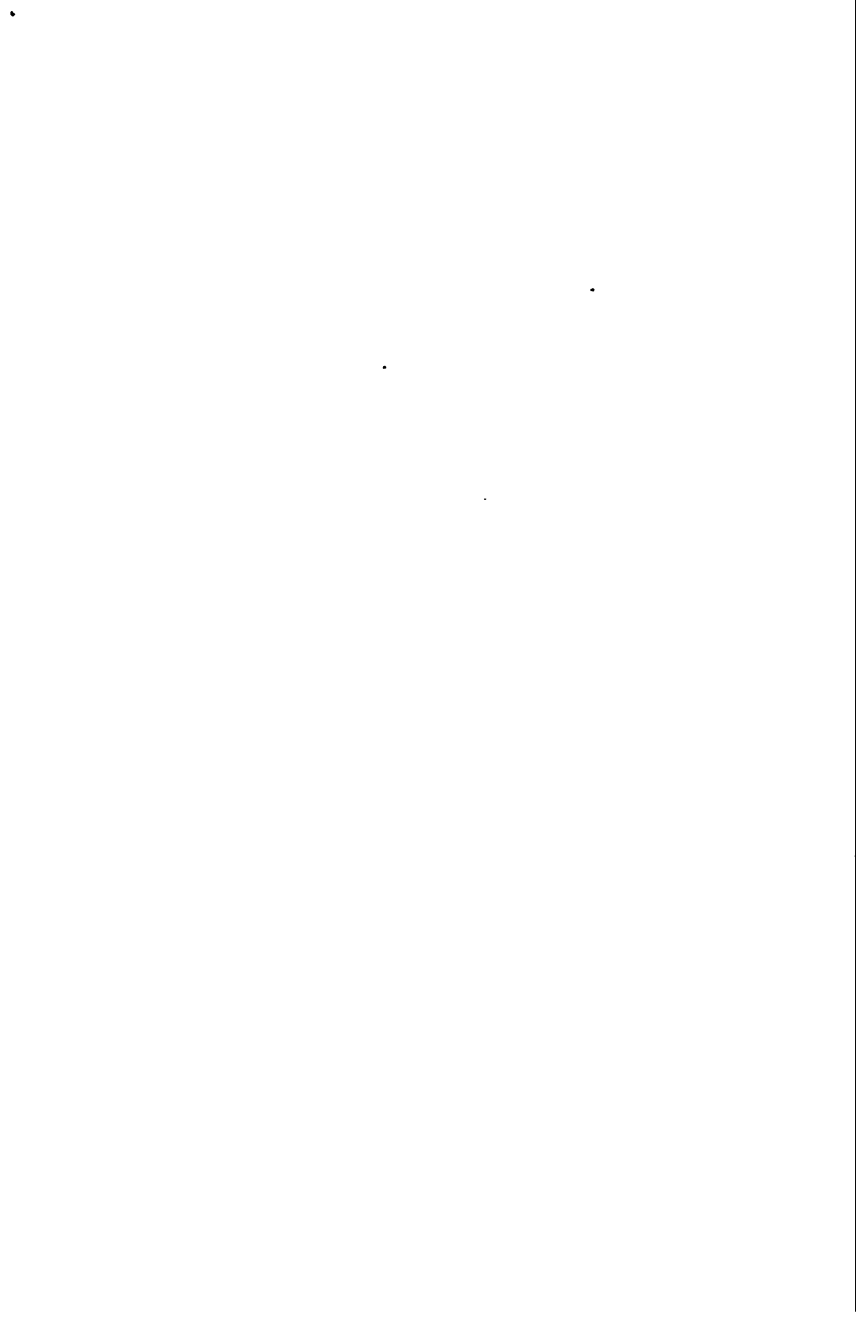
bruised and long to heal."

With noble mien and gracious gesture—thrilling to Jallot—she decorated him with the rose, after the manner of a princess rewarding her knight; while the barber, awed before the splendor of her countenance, looked on breathlessly, the wonder of love filling his eyes.

When Antoinette had finished, she sank down beside Jallot, her hand finding his in the shadow, her cheek touching his shoulder—they and the night sharing in silence the vast secret.

52

HC



AUG 26 1930

